

Joint Chiefs: Use military vs. drugs

by Marilyn Kay

On June 19, at a Navy strategy conference in Newport, R.I., Admiral James D. Watkins, chief of naval operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, outlined a proposal for the expanded use of military forces in the war against drugs. The proposed "massive new program," unanimously recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will be submitted to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and a meeting with relevant civilian and law-enforcement agencies is also on the agenda.

The plan described by Watkins would:

- Expand the use of U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps resources against narcotics traffickers, including to:

- Train anti-drug forces in Central America;
- Provide equipment and weapons, or loans to procure such equipment, to cooperating governments;
- Create a division of labor between the United States and the Ibero-American nations such that anti-drug forces in cooperating countries could strike against the extensive drug plantations in isolated rural areas, and at the "narco-terrorists" that guard them, while U.S. air and naval forces operating off the coasts block export.

Security of the hemisphere

Watkins said the program "could be a rallying point for this hemisphere," noting that the United States acting alone has barely been able to dent the traffic, and that "just isn't good enough." He referred to the role of the narcotics trade in financing and supporting leftist insurgencies in the hemisphere, making the trade a "national security problem."

On March 13, at an *EIR*-sponsored conference in Mexico City, a proposal for "strategic operations against the Western Hemisphere drug traffic" was delivered by *EIR* founder LaRouche to an international audience. The LaRouche proposal was a 15-point war plan which identified the international drug-traffic as "an evil and powerful government in its own right" which must be combatted by a declared war involving treaty arrangements between the United States and the sovereign republics of Ibero-America (see *EIR*, April 2, 1985).

There have been ongoing discussions of joint U.S./Ibero-

American military operations against drugs for some months. In early May, the hemisphere's naval commanders met in Norfolk, Va. at the XII Inter-American Naval Conference, passing a resolution which stated that illicit arms and narcotics traffic are inextricably linked and must be fought through hemispheric cooperation. Throughout Ibero-America, individual nations have sought bilateral and multilateral accords to enhance their drug-fighting capabilities, with an emphasis on better exchange of information and intelligence, upgraded communications, increased criminal sentencing, and upgraded surveillance. Earlier this year, there were informal discussions on creating an Ibero-American "Interpol," whose agents would not be hindered by national borders.

June 14 summit meetings between Venezuelan President Lusinchi and Colombian President Bentacur resulted in limited accords. This followed an attempt—rejected by the United Nations Security Council—by five nations of the Andean Pact to get financing for an investigation of the transnational drug traffic, which is "capable of undermining" their national sovereignty.

In addition to the unanimous recommendation of the Joint Chiefs described by Admiral Watkins, Rep. Charles Bennett (D-Fla.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on seapower, has put forth an amendment which would provide the military with broad new powers in the war against drugs. The Bennett amendment, for which no organized opposition has been mobilized, is expected to pass the House. It states that the Secretary of Defense at the request of the head of a federal agency with jurisdiction under the controlled substances act, "may assign members of the armed forces under the secretary's jurisdiction to assist drug enforcement officials of such agency in drug searches, seizures or arrests outside the land area of the United States. . . ."

The amendment was opposed by Defense Secretary Weinberger in a letter to Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the Committee, stating that "reliance on military forces to accomplish civilian tasks is detrimental to both military readiness and the democratic process." However, Weinberger added, "The proper role of our armed forces is to provide support so that the civilian law enforcement agencies can make necessary arrests, searches and seizures."

There is no doubt that it would be a great mistake to subject the military to requests from certain civilian agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which, under the direction of William Webster, has gone beyond the pale of the excesses identified with the "Hoover era." However, under bilateral or multilateral treaty arrangements as proposed by the Joint Chiefs and LaRouche, such a plan would be workable.

Not surprisingly, the Watkins plan was strongly opposed by the *Wall Street Journal* in a June 20 editorial arguing, "Drug interdiction should not be intertwined with other issues." Plenty of Wall Street banks stand to lose a lot of cash flow if the war on drugs is successfully prosecuted.