

How Drugs Can Be Wiped Out, Totally

by Dennis Small

This article is reprinted from EIR, July 26, 1996. The technological capabilities it documents for wiping out drugs non-lethally, are obviously much greater today.

Outside of moral indifferentism and the overt promotion of every-man-for-himself hedonism, there are two recurring arguments wielded in defense of the legalization of drugs. The first, is that legalization will cut drug prices drastically, and thereby take the high profitability (and concomitant violence) out of the trade. We addressed that false argument in the opening section of this report, where we proved that Dope, Inc. has itself *deliberately* lowered the prices of cocaine and heroin over the last two decades, as a classic marketing technique designed to increase the market for their “product.” Their strategy succeeded. To do more of the same, under the guise of legalization, would only ensure a vast new increase of drug consumption.

The second argument is pure, cultural pessimism: Drugs cannot be stopped, so we may as well learn to live with them. Many then go on to cite the experience of the last decade—but especially of George Bush [Sr.]’s phony “War on Drugs”—as “proof” that you just can’t win. Even the well-intentioned Clinton Administration is promoting the pathetic formulation that “this is not a war” to be won or lost, but rather it is like “fighting cancer”—which presumably means that we are destined to lose the battle.

However, a proper review of the last decade’s anti-drug efforts—both the successes and the failures—points to a different set of conclusions:

1. **Crop eradication** is effective. Even with primitive technologies, upwards of 25% of the world’s marijuana crop is being eradicated.

2. **Seizures** and drug interdiction can also do serious damage. Again with poor equipment and resources, more than 25% of world cocaine production was seized over the last ten years.

3. **Stopping drug money laundering** will never work ... if it isn’t tried. The story here is that a serious



NASA

More than a decade ago, technologies such as Landsat satellites, were already in use to monitor agricultural crops. Today, far more sophisticated technologies are available to detect drug crops, and, combined with law enforcement methods, could wipe out drugs altogether. Shown, a view of the planet’s surface from a NASA Landsat spacecraft.

effort has yet to be made, by any country anywhere in the world, on this, the most decisive front in the war on drugs.

To effectively dismantle Dope, Inc., it is necessary to act in a coordinated fashion on all three of these fronts. They are the three legs of the stool; without all three, the policy will not stand up.

The final, related consideration, is that the drug trade has to be fought simultaneously, in a coordinated fashion, on a global scale. Since Dope, Inc. is a multinational enterprise with operations in dozens of nations, it does little good to shut it down in one country only: It will simply move its operations to a more favorable environment.

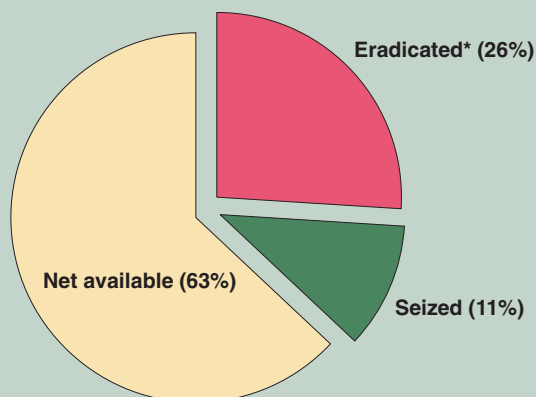
Eradication

Figure 1 shows the disposition of the total quantity of marijuana cultivated worldwide, over the ten-year period 1985-95. Most noteworthy is that a full 26% of what was planted, was eradicated. The United States, the largest producer in the world, eradicates an estimated one-third of its crop (the DEA claims it destroys one-half, but a review of the literature indicates this is overly optimistic).

FIGURE 1

Marijuana Eradication and Seizures

(% of Total Quantity Cultivated, 1985-95)



* Colombia, Mexico, and the United States.

Sources: NNICC; INCSR; DEA; NORML; PGR, Mexico; EIR.

Mexico, however, is the world leader on the eradication front: In 1995, it eliminated 11,800 hectares of marijuana, out of a total of 18,700 cultivated; that is, about two-thirds of the total. How do they do it, with almost no resources, and less in the way of technology? In general, thousands upon thousands of Mexican soldiers are deployed into the drug-producing zones to chop down marijuana plants with machetes and other rudimentary equipment. Aerial surveillance and spraying with defoliants occurs in some cases, but is by no means the rule. As U.S. anti-drug director Gen. Barry McCaffrey reported on April 8, 1996: “The Mexican Army has eradicated more illegal drugs in the last year than any other nation on the face of the Earth. And they did this at the risk of their own lives, and [there was] a lot of hard work and sweat and blood involved in that.”

If Mexico is able, with such methods, to knock out two-thirds of its marijuana before it is ever harvested, imagine what could be done with the application of serious resources and technologies. Satellite mapping and sophisticated aerial photography are capable of pinpointing every hectare cultivated, by crop type, on the face of the earth. Such capabilities have existed for almost *two decades*. As *21st Century Science & Technology* magazine explained in its January-February 1990 issue, a 1978 joint study by NASA and the Mexican government proved the case:

“The remote sensing techniques developed at NASA’s Earth Resources Laboratory to monitor agricultural crops from Landsat satellites [can] be used to

detect cannabis. The particular radiation reflectance signature for the marijuana crop was determined to be in the 1.55 to 1.75 micron band, in the infrared part of the electromagnetic spectrum.

“With this knowledge, NASA analysts could find the cannabis fields from the air. A multispectrum scanning instrument (MSS) from NASA, mounted under the wing of a Lear 35 jet, could cover 12,000 square miles of Mexico per day. The entire country could be mapped every 15 days, to allow crops to be targeted for destruction almost as soon as they started growing.”

Once the drug crops are detected, highly effective herbicides, such as glyphosate, can then be applied massively, using virtual air flotillas protected by the respective national air forces, if necessary. For hard-to-reach mountainous areas and deep valleys, modern, armored helicopters can be equipped for the task.

Environmentalism arguments against such spraying are specious. Herbicides have been designed that are damaging only to the drug crops, and not to other plants. As for the purported harmful effect on the poor, unsuspecting consumers, they should protect themselves by simply not consuming the illegal substances in the first place. In any event, there is some question whether the herbicide does more damage, or the pot or cocaine does.

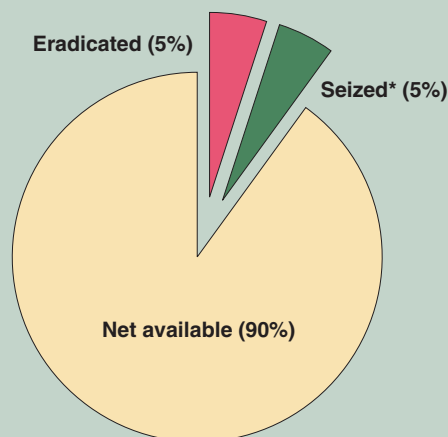
Marijuana cultivation in the United States poses a greater challenge to eradication, but it is far from an impossible task. The first problem is a political one: Much of the marijuana cultivation occurs on national parks land, and the environmentalist lobby is a powerful obstacle to serious eradication. Secondly, over recent years, much of domestic production has been moved indoors or underground, into vast, technologically sophisticated plantations which are not detectable with standard aerial surveillance. Here, however, infrared photography, which is heat sensitive, is very useful. So, too, is the measurement of unusually high rates of water and electricity consumption in areas where they are not warranted. Similarly, the discharge of unauthorized chemical effluents can be readily detected, and point to probable indoor drug facilities. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency is reportedly already providing the DEA with useful assistance in this regard.

The same basic approach can and must be applied to other drugs, including opium and coca. Today, only 5% of the opium crop is eradicated (see **Figure 2**), while less than 2% of the total coca crop is eradicated.

FIGURE 2

Illicit Opium Eradication and Seizures

(% of Total Quantity Cultivated, 1985-95)



* as heroin.

Eradicating a quarter of a drug crop, as currently occurs with marijuana, is not enough to seriously dent the supply. In fact, it may only serve to maintain market control and weed out the competition. However, what if 90% were to be eradicated? If there is sufficient political will from the national governments in question, and adequate technology and other resources provided by the more affluent nations (the United States in particular), it is not unreasonable to suggest that as much as 90% of all three major illicit drug crops—marijuana, opium, and coca—could be eradicated on the spot.

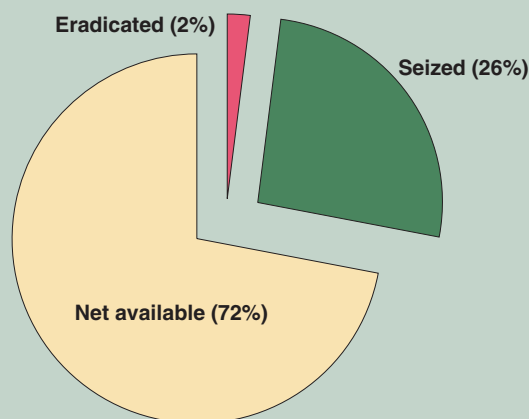
Seizures

Figure 3 shows what has happened with coca and cocaine over the past decade. Here the level of eradication is pathetically low—2%. There is organized political resistance to such programs in all three producer nations—Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia—by “peasant” associations financed by the drug cartels and their allied UN-based non-governmental organizations (see *EIR*, Nov. 10, 1995, “New Terror International Targets the Americas”). Furthermore, there are major problems at the level of the respective governments: President Samper Pizano of Colombia is owned, lock, stock, and barrel, by the Cali Cartel; President Sánchez de Lozada of Bolivia is a member of the pro-drug Inter-American Dialogue, and has himself openly advocated drug legalization; and President Alberto Fujimori of Peru has staunchly refused to eradicate, for fear of driving mil-

FIGURE 3

Cocaine Eradication and Seizures

(% of Total Quantity Cultivated, 1985-95)

Sources: NNICC; INCSR; OFECOD, Peru; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

lions of Andean peasants into the arms of the Shining Path narcoterrorists, and for fear of losing the hundreds of millions of drug dollars which enter the Peruvian economy every year, and without which Peru could not service its foreign debt.

Cocaine seizures, however, are a somewhat brighter picture, with 26% of everything produced between 1985-95 having been intercepted and seized by various national authorities. The United States makes about 40% of the total worldwide seizures, but even here, the resources deployed are woefully inadequate to the task.

First, there is the question of aerial and maritime detection and interception. Cooperation between the United States and various Ibero-American governments has improved somewhat over the recent period, with some U.S. radar equipment and technical support being provided to Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and other countries. But it is far less than what is needed to really dent the trafficking. A full complement of ground radar and linked AWAC capabilities needs to be deployed, which would detect all unregistered flights and immediately transmit the information to national military units each assigned to patrol their own territory and air space. In-depth technical cooperation and intelligence sharing, with strict respect for national sovereignty, is called for in such efforts.

Second, there is the monumental problem of inspecting all of the cargo which *legally* enters the United States. DEA officials estimate that a mere 3% of the 8-

9 million containers entering U.S. ports annually are actually inspected today. Similarly, hundreds of millions of passengers cross the borders, as do about 12 million air cargo shipments, and something like 47 million trucks—a mammoth screening challenge. Even in those cases where inspection does occur, the drug traffickers are constantly developing ingenious new ploys to foil existing detection systems: packing cocaine inside concrete posts eludes X-rays; placing packaged cocaine deep inside blocks of frozen shrimp stymies drug-sniffing dogs; hiding cocaine in canned tuna lots, where only one can in a thousand is not legitimate, stands an excellent chance of passing inspection; and so forth.

Only the extensive introduction of new detection technologies will turn the tide. For example, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technologies, today applied routinely in the medical field, hold promise for the war on drugs. Here the detection system excites atomic nuclei in the scanned material and, by “reading” the atomic signature of elements, is able to locate the presence of illegal narcotics. Currently, however, only relatively small targets (such as letters or packages) can be effectively scanned this way. Other technologies under development, such as the Explosive/Contraband Detection System (E/CDS) which uses alpha and gamma rays, can handle somewhat larger packages, perhaps 2×2×2 feet—still substantially smaller than standard cargo containers (8×8×40 feet).

Another promising possibility is to use neutron beam technology, developed in the 1980s to verify nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament accords, in the anti-drug war. The technology was designed to put a Soviet nuclear missile through a screening system and count the number of warheads on it, because existing treaties didn’t allow the physical opening of the missile. The converted version of the technology consists of a kind of gantry through which up to 30 containers per hour can be moved, while a neutron beam scans their contents and tells customs agents what chemical elements they contain.

Although much work is still required, it is evident that such an approach is feasible. Once achieved, all containers entering the United States could be subjected to scanning by such detection systems, and there would be a gigantic jump in the amount of drugs seized. This, combined with the aerial interdiction described above, would be capable of seizing not 25% of the drugs shipped—as with cocaine today—but perhaps

75% or more of the amount shipped.

So, if only 10% of the drugs cultivated gets past the eradication stage, and if only 25% of that reduced amount gets past the seizure stage, we are talking about only 2-3% of the total amount initially cultivated actually making it through to the consumer market. That would put a substantial dent in Dope, Inc. But it is still not enough.

Stopping Drug-Money Laundering

The third leg of the stool, and the key to any successful anti-drug strategy, is to aggressively identify and put out of business any and all financial institutions that engage in drug money laundering—which, after all, is the level from which the drug trade is actually controlled. It is at this point in the discussion that people normally start getting very nervous.

The reason, as we have documented elsewhere in this report, is that global money laundering is run from the top by the most powerful financial interests on the face of the Earth: the City of London, the British Commonwealth, and associated forces.

But once the political will is established to carry out the task, here, too, modern technologies are available. Besides introducing anti-money-laundering legislation in countries where it doesn’t now exist, and closing all the obvious loopholes in existing reporting regulations in countries like the United States, real-time computer tracking of even the most sophisticated money-laundering schemes is possible. Coupled with banking transparency—the bane of the free marketeers—such computer monitoring and tracking of suspect transactions can identify the vast majority of money laundering globally.

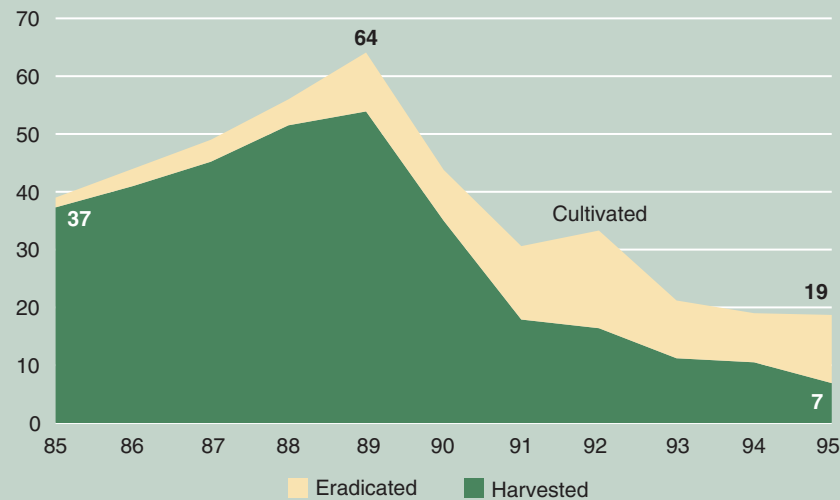
As important as they are, none of the above measures will be effective, however, unless they are carried out on a global scale by a coordinated effort among sovereign nation-states. The following case study shows why.

In **Figure 4** we see the growing effectiveness of Mexico’s marijuana eradication campaign, beginning in 1989. In 1988, only 4,500 hectares were eradicated; but in 1989, according to official statistics, this more than doubled to 10,200 hectares eradicated. In subsequent years, equivalent amounts, and more, were eradicated, reaching a high of 16,900 hectares eradicated in 1992. As the graph shows, the effect of that campaign was not only to eliminate the specific hectares in question, but it also significantly discouraged cultivation in

FIGURE 4

Marijuana Eradication in Mexico

(Hectares, Thousands)

Sources: NNICC; INCSR; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

general, which, as a result, dropped from over 64,000 hectares planted in 1989, to less than 19,000 in 1995—a 70% decline in only six years. The area harvested dropped during that same period by an even greater 87%—from 53,900 hectares in 1989 to 6,900 in 1995. In terms of marijuana output, Mexico went from producing an astonishing 30,200 tons in 1989, to “only” 3,650 tons in 1995.

Was Dope, Inc. concerned? Not particularly.

At precisely the point that Mexico began to put a dent in its marijuana output, Dope, Inc. took steps to make sure that another major producer, Colombia—which itself had been successfully eradicating in the mid-1980s—was brought back on line as a major source. As **Figure 5** shows, in 1985, under the government of Virgilio Barco, Colombia was eradicating half of its cultivated marijuana: 6,000 of 12,000 hectares. Over the subsequent four years, the eradication campaign, which made very successful use of glyphosate herbicide, in particular, forced the total amount cultivated and harvested to

drop drastically, down to a low point of 1,500 hectares harvested in 1990—a 75% drop from five years earlier. But then, under the César Gaviria (1990-94) and Ernesto Samper (1994-98) governments, *all* marijuana eradication ceased—to the delight of the British-run environmentalists, the British-run legalization lobby, and the British-run drug cartels. Predictably, marijuana production rose back up to nearly the levels it had achieved before the eradication campaign began. Thus, in 1995, Colombia produced 4,133 tons of marijuana, to Mexico’s 3,285—beating Mexico out for the dubious distinction of being Ibero-America’s biggest pot producer, for the first time since 1982.

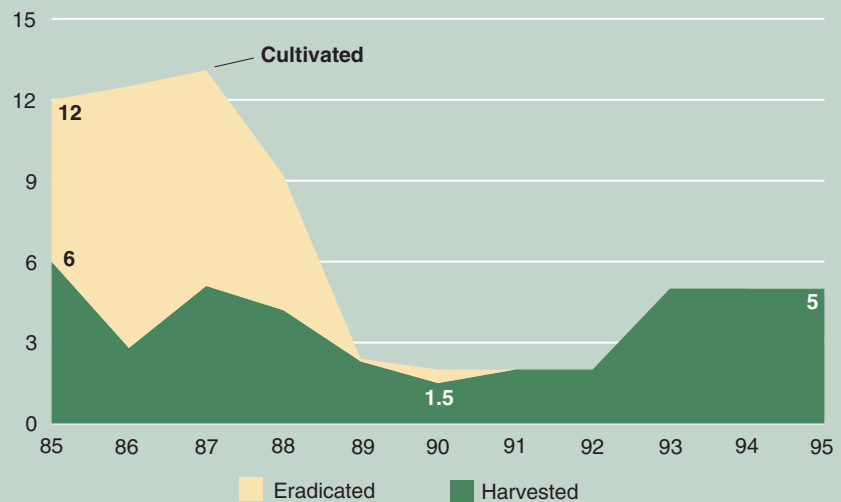
The moral of the story is, that

Dope, Inc. must be defeated everywhere, if it is to be defeated anywhere. With that in mind, we recall for the reader the prescient remarks by Lyndon LaRouche to an *EIR*-sponsored anti-drug conference in Mexico City, held over ten years ago, on March 13, 1985, just as Dope, Inc.’s “Development Decade” was getting under way:

FIGURE 5

Marijuana Eradication in Colombia

(Hectares, Thousands)



Sources: NNICC; INCSR.

“It is clear to the governments fighting the international drug-traffickers, that the drug-traffic could never be defeated if each of our nations tried to fight this evil independently of the other nations of this hemisphere. If the drug-traffickers’ laboratories are shut down in Colombia, new laboratories open up in Brazil. . . .

“The greatest political threat to democracy in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and other countries, is the use of the billions of revenues held by the drug-traffickers to fund terrorist armies. . . . It is impossible to break the ominously increasing political power of the drug-traffickers . . . without capturing the billions of dollars of drug-revenues run through corrupt banking institutions. . . .

“Special attention should be concentrated on those banks, insurance enterprises, and other business institutions which are in fact elements of an international financial cartel coordinating the flow of hundreds of billions annually of revenues from the international drug-traffic. Such entities should be classed as outlaws according to the ‘crimes against humanity’ doctrine elaborated at the postwar Nuremberg Tribunal” (see below, for LaRouche’s 15-point plan for a war on drugs).