

Outline

White Paper on the War on Drugs

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Executive Summary

The central argument of this paper is that Central America will have a very difficult time making progress on its many challenges unless it and the U.S. change the strategy implicit in the “war on drugs.” That strategy has failed miserably. Worse that strategy has been pernicious: analogous to those who in order to put out a fire decide to pour gasoline on it. The strategy in addition to futilely wasting billions of dollars of taxpayer money, has created billions of dollars of profits for drug dealers and gangs and encouraged them to use those profits to corrupt police forces, governments, perpetuate violence, and support a host of activities with huge economic and moral damage to society.

To continue this strategy is lunacy. It is time to start discussing and experimenting with alternative strategies. We need to encourage the study of similar cases in history like the era of prohibition. We need to understand how others are dealing with similar problems in other parts of the world. We need to encourage our most creative thinkers to design alternative strategies. It is the height of stupidity to continue to do more of the same.

Since it appears that the politicians in the U.S. feel little pressure to confront the failure of their strategy and a huge amount of the cost of the conflict is being experienced in Mesoamerica, we Central Americans cannot wait for others to solve the problem. We must begin the discussion and force the issue on to the political agenda. We need to begin discussing the tactics we follow to disassociate ourselves from the U.S.’s war on drugs and how we make it politically more expensive for U.S. politicians to continue to support this failed strategy rather than finding better solutions.

The sections which follow cover the following topics: *(Since this draft was written I have collected a number of studies and tried to read up on answers to all these questions. I haven’t had time to write up my research but everything I’ve read support the hypothesis. The evidence is even more damning than I had realized. If you want to read a single study by a blue ribbon presidential commission that says*

much of what I am arguing but appears to have been ignored, read Report of the Global Commission on Drugs, June 2011 headed by George Schultz and including notables like Ceasar Gavina and Paul Volker.)

1. **Definition of the “war on drugs.”** What are the key elements of the strategy bundled under the “war on drugs.” How did the war evolve?
2. **Evidence of failure.** What is the data that shows that the strategy has failed abysmally at stopping the usage of drugs and their negative consequences.
3. **The Monster Created.** How has this strategy created a government-drug complex with a huge bill for tax payers and a huge profit pool for the drug traders.
4. **Evidence of collateral damage.** How has the money generated in this complex directly corrupted police forces and governments, paid for violence, criminalized gangs and filled our jails? How have the indirect costs from this war undercut economic growth and undermined government institutions? Why work on many of the challenges facing our region is likely to fail if we don’t change the war on drugs strategy?
5. **Alternative options.** What are some of the alternative options suggested by history or strategies of other countries? What ideas are experts suggesting be considered?
6. **An action plan for Central Americans.** How can we in Central America force our own governments and the U.S. government to recognize the failure of the war and the need to find a new strategy?