

Bush has de facto decriminalized drugs, adopted Dope, Inc.'s program

by Jeffrey Steinberg

It's time the drug legalization mafia dropped its phony anti-Bush rhetoric and finally admitted that President Bush has done more for the dope lobby than any White House occupant, with the sole possible exception of Jimmy Carter.

EIR reported several weeks ago that the President's National Drug Control Strategy and the State Department's annual international survey of illegal narcotics flows were both shameful coverups of the fact that Dope, Inc.'s profits have gone one way up during the Bush presidency.

According to *EIR*'s own international narcotics survey, published last Nov. 9, Dope, Inc. is doubling in size every five years. The geometric growth of the illegal drug economy is expected to continue through the 1990s, as major drug cartels prepare to expand their markets into Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Third World.

The Bush administration has proven to be a reliable business partner for the world's leading narco-regimes. Syria's dictator Hafez al-Assad, whose Army presides over an opium and hashish industry centered out of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, is Washington's newest friend in the Arab world, as the result of Damascus's role in the anti-Iraq coalition. According to the *EIR* survey, the communist regime in Beijing, a favorite of the President, has cranked up opium production such that the China-centered "Golden Triangle" accounted for over half the world's heroin output in 1990—at a profit of \$51 billion. The Bush-installed regime in Panama City is so dominated by drug money launderers that even the *New York Times* has ridiculed the hypocrisy of Bush's targeting of Gen. Manuel Noriega. After a recent "drug summit" between Bush and Colombia's President César Gaviria, that Ibero-American nation publicly abandoned its commitment to extradite cartel leaders to the United States and brought the narco-terrorist M-19 guerrilla group into a power-sharing arrangement.

These horror stories are the tip of the iceberg. *EIR* has obtained a recently released set of statistics on the domestic drug war that paint an even more gruesome picture.

Drug economy pays 'taxes'

The document is the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) annual "Domestic Statistical Summary" for Fiscal Year 1990, which was released on Dec. 31, 1990. The two pages of statistics confirm many of the charges that have been published in the pages of this magazine for the past several years. Among them:

- The Bush administration has all but abandoned the effort to eradicate the nation's massive domestic marijuana crop. On Feb. 8, *EIR* published a cover story showing that marijuana is now America's number-one cash crop, accounting for over \$50 billion in annual revenue for Dope, Inc.

EIR, using statistics readily available to the federal government, showed that by 1987, in 37 states, marijuana was the number-one cash crop. Even in California, a major agricultural state, illegal marijuana production had surpassed the state's major legitimate crop in market value. According to all available statistics, U.S. domestic marijuana output rose steadily during the period from 1987-90, rising from an estimated \$33.1 billion in profits to over \$50 billion in that four-year period.

- While pressing local police to "jail a pusher," the federal government's prosecutions of interstate and international drug traffickers and drug bankers have fallen off significantly. In other words, the big-time dealers are getting away literally with murder, while the majority of small-time local pushers and users who are being sent to prison are inner-city blacks and Hispanics.

- While drug seizures are down across the board, asset seizures from accused narcotics traffickers have skyrocketed. The Justice Department has made it a standing practice to immediately seize all property and bank accounts of accused drug traffickers. Put together with the fact that fewer traffickers are being apprehended and fewer quantities of drugs are being captured through interdiction, this dramatic jump in cash and property seizures amounts to an informal "tax" on the drug economy.

So what does the dope lobby have to complain about? Two of the pillars of the decriminalization schema advanced at last autumn's annual convention of the Drug Policy Foundation, the dressed-up version of the Carter-era National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), were decriminalization and regulation of the domestic marijuana industry, and federal and state taxes on dope profits.

Statistics tell the story

While claiming to be "tough on drugs," Bush has de facto adopted two of the planks of the decriminalizers' program.

The three tables accompanying this article are all based on the DEA domestic survey. **Table 1** details the falloff in drug seizures over the past two years. After a significant jump in

TABLE 1

Domestic drug seizures decreased under Bush
(kilograms seized)

Fiscal year	Heroin	Cocaine	Cannabis
1987	364.7	37,118.4	649,548.2
1988	829.4	58,048.1	602,254.9
1989	779.0	82,631.2	341,567.0
1990	633.2	71,599.2	140,860.0
Percent change 1989-90	-18.7%	-13.4%	-58.8%

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration Domestic Survey, Spring 1991.

TABLE 2

Conviction rate soared under Bush
(number of arrest/convictions)

Fiscal year	Arrests	Convictions	Conviction rate
1987	22,211	12,359	56%
1988	24,646	13,076	53%
1989	25,201	15,889	63%
1990	21,799	15,314	70%
Percent change 1989-90	-13.5%	-3.6%	

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration Domestic Survey, Spring 1991.

heroin seizures in FY 1988, the number of seizures has gone steadily down during the two years of the Bush administration. This falloff in captured heroin cannot be attributed to a decline in heroin use among Americans. Drug enforcement sources have acknowledged that declining profits from cocaine have prompted the Ibero-American drug cartels to diversify into transporting heroin. Heroin imports into the United States are believed to have increased significantly during the FY 1989-90 period when seizures fell by 18.7%.

Cocaine seizures peaked in FY 1989 and then fell by 13.4% last year. Marijuana eradication and interdiction has been on a steady decline since the beginning of the survey data in FY 1987. Whereas nearly 650,000 kilos of marijuana were removed in 1987, last year's total was under 141,000 kilos. The seizures dropped by 58.8% in the last 12-month period alone. Yet, government and drug "industry" statistics both show a booming growth rate in domestic U.S. marijuana cultivation, the bulk of which takes place on federally owned property (i.e., in national forests) or in ultra-modern marijuana "factories" employing state-of-the-art agricultural technologies.

The federal arrest statistics are equally revealing. As shown in Table 2, federal narcotics arrests reached a four-

TABLE 3

Growth in asset seizures and forfeitures
(millions \$)

Fiscal year	Seizures	Forfeitures
1987	511.3	174.7
1988	671.3	273.3
1989	976.9	320.4
1990	1,068.3	427.1
Percent change 1989-90	+9.4%	+33.3%

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration Domestic Survey, Spring 1991.

year low in FY 1990, down 13.5% from the previous year. However, the number of federal drug convictions fell only a few percentage points from the previous year; and the rate of convictions increased by over seven points, from an already high figure of 63% to over 70%.

The extraordinarily high rate of convictions cannot, unfortunately, be attributed to high-quality law enforcement efforts combined with diligent and effective prosecution teams. Rather, the new federal sentencing guidelines and the Supreme Court's recent assault on the Bill of Rights have driven most criminal defendants to opt for plea bargain deals to lighten their time in federal prison rather than run the risk of draconian sentences if convicted. In effect, the federal courts have become instruments for advancing a federally funded army of informants rather than for meting out justice.

Further, since the 1985 Department of Justice whitewash of the Bank of Boston's laundering of \$1.6 billion in dope profits (no bank officers were indicted and the bank itself was forced to pay a fine amounting to a fraction of the profits garnered from the money laundering), the Reagan and Bush administrations have systematically covered up the complicity of all of the major U.S. commercial banks in the dope trade. With the sole exception of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) case, which was tied to the frameup of Bush political target Manuel Noriega and the December 1989 invasion of Panama, no major American or foreign bank has been touched for money laundering by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The dismal picture is completed by Table 3, dealing with the meteoric rise in asset seizures and forfeitures. The combined figure for FY 1990 was \$1,495,400,000. As the chart shows, both asset categories rose steadily over the four-year period of the survey, during the same period that arrests of interstate traffickers and seizures of narcotics were going down.

More traffickers on the streets, more dope on the streets, more money in the federal coffers via "indirect taxation" of the dope industry: This appears to be the essence of the Bush drug war. It is certainly the essence of the dope lobby's public agenda.