
Interview: Joseph DiGenova

Breakdown of civil order in U.S. cities

Joseph DiGenova is a former U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. He helped draft the 1988 Omnibus Drug Act, and he comments on the breakdown of civil order in some U.S. cities, exemplified by the record-breaking drug-related homicide rate in Washington, D.C.

EIR: I'd like to ask you about the comment attributed to you, that you support the proposal to deploy National Guard troops in Washington, D.C.

DiGenova: I didn't say that. I was asked what I thought of that idea, and I said that it was worthy of consideration, but *not* to do law enforcement work, but to do support work. We have specific types of equipment to be provided to the police, night vision stuff, weaponry, helicopters. . . . The National Guard is not trained to do police work, and I don't think they can be used in that way, but they certainly could be used in a support capacity, which I think could be very helpful. What we need here are more police.



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EIR: It has been observed that drug gangs active in Washington are extensions of the distribution networks that originate in Colombia. Do you think that absent a full-scale assault on the origins of those gangs, there can be an effective campaign against them domestically?

DiGenova: Well, the answer is, number one, yes, there can be a campaign against them domestically, and we have all the tools necessary to do it—all we need is the will; number two, we have to do whatever we can to force those foreign countries from which these groups emanate to do their part—Colombia, Bolivia, and elsewhere, just as the Italians have done internally in their effort to suppress the Sicilian mafia.

But the most important answer to this problem is drying up demand. They're not forcing people to take drugs in this country. And people are willingly embracing this activity, and until we dry up demand, the efforts we make at suppressing supply are going to be more and more difficult. It's as simple as that, unfortunately.

EIR: There are situations which you described as "Colombianization," where civil authority has broken down in certain parts of the city—

DiGenova: Correct, I think that is already happening.

EIR: What can be done to reestablish the rule of law? It seems that drying up demand is more complicated than simply getting people to resist drugs.

DiGenova: Sure it is. It is extremely difficult to reestablish civil authority once it is lost. And the longer it remains in abeyance, the more difficult it is to restore it, because people become used to a different kind of authority, certain mores and cultures grow up which make it more difficult to reestablish civil authority. Colombia has now found that out. They have lost control of at least one-third of their country. Some of those people that now control that territory are becoming literally and openly involved in electoral politics; they are now beginning to partially control the government, and it seems obvious to me that the parallel is too close, and too frightening not to be responded to.

EIR: That is what people consider the essence of terrorism in these countries.

DiGenova: Yes, narco-terrorism. No question about it. I wouldn't necessarily define these people as terrorists, I would define them as violent criminals because terrorism, unfortunately has that note of political motivation behind it. I don't think any of these drug gangs here are politically motivated *yet*.

EIR: Is this situation unique to D.C.?

DiGenova: No. In D.C., it's more severe because of the compressed geographical area—62 square miles—but L.A., Chicago, and elsewhere, there are similar secessions of territory from the grasp of civil authority. If anybody thinks that the Bloods and the Crypts don't control certain territory in L.A., they don't understand how that process is working, and they are doing something else, they are branching out, and becoming an emerging organized crime group with spin-off organizations in the Northwest and the Eastern part of the United States, and elsewhere. The Crypts and the Bloods have shown up in various parts of the country, distributing drugs and enforcing their networks with violence. They are an emerging organized crime group.

EIR: In light of the Colombia experience, would you characterize this as a national security threat, that the situation is this advanced in the nation's capital?

DiGenova: It's always been a national security threat, internally, and it's been described that way by others, not by me. There's no question that when you have millions of Americans using drugs willingly, and organizations ensconced to ensure supply, you have something that eats away at the heart of a democracy.