

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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MEXICO & THE DRUG WAR

DOLE URGES PRESIDENT TO SEND TOUGH MESSAGE TO MEXICO, CERTIFY THAT MEXICO HAS NOT COOPERATED FULLY IN DRUG WAR

WASHINGTON -- Citing the destructive effects of drugs on American society, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole today told President Clinton "it is essential that we make clear that the government of Mexico must do more to combat the flow of illegal drugs across our common border." In a letter sent to the White House, Senator Dole called on President Clinton to send a tough message to Mexico by certifying that Mexico has "not cooperated fully" with the United States in fighting the war on drugs. By law, President Clinton faces a March 1st deadline to certify to Congress which nations have "cooperated fully" with the United States in counternarcotics efforts. Senator Dole asserted "the United States has an interest in stabilizing the Mexican economy through well-monitored and mutually beneficial trade. But we cannot allow Mexico to continue to ship hundreds of tons of the drug poison into our country with impunity."

The text of Senator Dole's letter to the President follows:

Dear Mr. President:

As you know, I have been highly critical of your Administration's antidrug policies. One of your first official acts as President was to fire more than 80 percent of the staff in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the "drug czar's" office. Drug prosecutions by the Justice Department have dropped dramatically and the interdiction effort--the process by which drugs are seized before they reach our shores--has waned. Sadly, the most memorable voice in your Administration on the drug issue has been that of a Surgeon General who apparently believes the most effective way to fight illegal drugs is to legalize them.

Nevertheless, there are some signs of hope: I applaud your recent appointment of General Barry McCaffrey to head up the drug czar's office. General McCaffrey has the discipline and the commitment to reinvigorate the federal antidrug effort, despite the limited resources available to him. I also want to commend you for your recent statements warning the public about the disturbing increase in teenage drug use, which has nearly doubled since 1992. All of us in positions of authority--parents, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and yes, politicians--must be willing to say over and over again that drug use is wrong. Our children will listen to this message, but they must hear it first.

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You will soon have another opportunity to exercise leadership in the fight against drugs. As you know, the Foreign Assistance Act requires you to certify to Congress whether or not Mexico has "cooperated fully" with the United States in combating the production and shipment of illegal drugs into the United States. The deadline for this certification, March 1, is fast approaching.

Mexico has regrettably compiled a record of indifference and even outright complicity in the drug trade. Today, approximately 70% of the 400 tons of cocaine entering the United States annually comes across the border with Mexico. An estimated 25% of the heroin consumed in the United States enters our country through Mexico, including the black-tar variety produced in Mexico. Mexicans are also widely acknowledged to be the leading U.S. distributors of methamphetamine, commonly known as speed; from mid-1993 through early 1995, Mexican traffickers reportedly produced at least 150 tons of methamphetamine for shipment to the United States.

The sad truth is that some Mexican officials are intentionally turning a blind eye to the growing power of the major Mexican drug cartels and to their increasing cooperation with Columbian drug traffickers. Although the Mexican government recently apprehended drug lord Juan Garcia Abrego with U.S. assistance, even the Mexican Attorney General has confirmed that a number of his key prosecutors have been on the payroll of the drug cartels. In the words of your own Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Mexican drug traffickers are producing their own heroin, speed, and marijuana, and they have "entered into an unholy alliance" with the Cali cartel of Columbia.

According to press reports, your Administration is divided on the issue of whether to certify Mexico under the Foreign Assistance Act. If we are to be honest, we cannot credibly say that the government of Mexico has "cooperated fully" with the drug enforcement effort. If you choose to use your authority to grant a national interest waiver, it is essential that we make clear that the government of Mexico must do more to combat the flow of illegal drugs across our common border.

Of course, the United States has an interest in stabilizing the Mexican economy through well-monitored and mutually beneficial trade. But we cannot allow Mexico to continue to ship hundreds of tons of the drug poison into our country with impunity. We must never lose sight of the devastating effects of drugs on our society, and especially on our nation's youth. Drug use has an insidious reach that does not stop with the abuser--it reaches out and undermines the very social fabric of our nation. The rising availability of drugs has meant more drug-related deaths, more juvenile crime, more unsafe schools, and more broken families across America.

Accordingly, I call upon you to state clearly and emphatically that Mexico has not cooperated fully with U.S. counternarcotics efforts.

Sincerely,

Bob Dole