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NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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HAITI POLICY UPDATE

DRUG SMUGGLING DOESN'T JUSTIFY HAITI INVASION, STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT INDICATES; APPOINT INDEPENDENT FACT-FINDING COMMISSION

Some involved in the administration's Haiti policy are shopping for an invasion rationale, and they ended up at the narcotics counter. This is a new twist to President Clinton's foreign policy -- looking for reasons to invade a country. According to recent news reports, U.S. government agencies have been tasked to find evidence that would justify U.S. military action in Haiti to fight narcotics smuggling. It seems to me that an island under blockade is not a very good drug trans-shipment point. But despite the obvious, the administration has begun a fishing expedition.

State Department Report

The administration does not need to look any farther than the State Department's April 1994 Comprehensive Report on International Narcotics. On page 191, it says, "Compared to trafficking indicators in other areas such as the Bahamas or Mexico, the current level of detected air and maritime drug-related activity in Haiti is low." On page 192, the report goes on to say the U.S. government "does not have evidence directly linking senior [government of Haiti] officials to drug trafficking...".

Activity is comparatively low, and there is no evidence of direct complicity. The record seems pretty clear -- an invasion in search of a reason would be hard pressed to use Haitian drug smuggling. Any level of drug smuggling is unacceptable but, based on the State Department's own evidence, invasions of Colombia or the Bahamas would do more to slow the drug trade than an invasion of Haiti.

Haiti is Not Panama

Some have tried to compare Haiti to Panama. Haiti is not Panama. Months before Operation Just Cause in Panama, Noriega had been indicted in the U.S. -- an indictment that later led to a conviction. There are no indictments in Haiti. In Panama, American lives were at risk. In Haiti, I know of no threat to Americans from the military regime. On Panama, the Senate passed numerous resolutions opposed to Noriega, and urging more U.S. action from 1987 to 1989. On Haiti last year, we passed an amendment calling for congressional authorization before military action by a vote of 98-2.

Haiti's military regime is despicable, but blaming them for the narcotics problem in the United States is particularly ironic from an administration that gutted the drug czar's office, downgraded the State Department's international anti-drug efforts, and is reducing Drug Enforcement Administration personnel.

Fact-Finding Commission

If the administration wants to fight narcotics coming into the U.S., there is much to do without invading Haiti. And if the administration really wants to build a domestic consensus over its Haiti policy, it should join with Congress in appointing an independent commission to evaluate the situation, not raise the false flag of narcotics trafficking.

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* Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 4:20 PM.