

**Testimony**

**Of**

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**Returning to Common Sense, Leadership and Bipartisan Effort**

**Against Narcotics Abuse, Crime and Addiction**

**Domestic Policy Subcommittee**

**Oversight and Government Reform Committee**

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**2:00 p.m.**

My thoughts are elementary today. I have a few simple, if strongly held views to share. These views cross party lines; there is nothing inherently Republican or Democrat about them. They are what I would dare to call common sense, the sorts of understandings that are nurtured in America's heartland and sustained by experience across the world.

These views emerge from a lifetime of work in both the demand and supply fields, not least advising or assisting federal, state and local officials, working with state and national prevention, education, treatment and law enforcement professionals and non-profits.

These views are distilled from studying both economics and law as a graduate student, and then serving in the larger counter-narcotics efforts for over 20 years in courtrooms, jails, school houses, treatment facilities, places as diverse as Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico on one hand, Thailand, Malaysia and Laos on the other. I have had the good fortune of hunkering down in Baghdad and Kabul to talk counter-narcotics, and the sad task of helping parents who have lost kids to drugs re-find life's purpose.

Professionally, my views are molded by five years up here, on the Hill, running a Bipartisan Drug Policy Working Group co-chaired by former Congressman Bill Zeliff and Charlie Rangel, Speaker Hastert's Drug Free America Task Force, and a subcommittee that elevated and vetted drug-related demand and supply-side legislation. I was a principle author of half a dozen pieces of legislation that helped, I would like to think, save young lives - from the 1997 Drug Czar Reauthorization Act to the Drug Free

**Communities Act, from the Meth Trafficking Act to the Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act.**

**In the late 1990s I started teaching on counter-narcotics and oversight at Harvard's Extension School, in part because I felt no one was teaching much in those vital areas, and almost no one was teaching about the area in which those two subjects -- drug policy and oversight -- overlapped. In 2003, I wrote the book *Narcotics and Terrorism* because the links were too bold to ignore, and from late 2003 to 2005, I was permitted the great honor of being Colin Powell's Assistant Secretary of State for both counter-narcotics and law enforcement ... handling both demand and supply anti-drug programs in 70 countries.**

... Which all brings me here today, at a time when I am again no more than a commentator. My thoughts in short are these:

**(1) To cast the nation's counter-narcotics efforts over the past two decades as a waste of time, as misguided, as a failure is simply wrong. We have collectively succeeded in many ways.** For periods of several years at a time, during both Republican and Democratic administrations, we have managed to change attitudes and behavior patterns. We have managed during the high-attention times to educate young Americans well, pull more addicted Americans back from the abyss, reduce emergency room admissions for various illegal drugs, reduce certain categories of violent and property crime tied to drug use, and concretely return rule of law and stability to formerly drug-ravaged countries.

**(2) What we have not been able to do in any permanent way yet is to erase the recurring need for education, treatment and the deterrence born of keeping narcotics at the front and center as a law enforcement and national security issue, community, family and personal responsibility issue.** We have not found a way to sustain national will and attention around a topic few like to discuss, either in their own lives, the lives of their families or even their schools and communities, never mind the nation. We have yet to erase the reality and enormous heartbreak of drug abuse and addiction, drug-related accidents, drug-related suicides, the tragedy of sudden death by drugged driving, falling educational performance tied to drug dependence, drug-related abuse of women and children ( 80 percent of which is tied to substance abuse according to both the Clinton and Bush Justice Departments) , drug-related violence in our towns, cities and at the SW border, and - yes - drug-funded terror groups which now number more than 25, increasingly encroach on US interests around the world, and include Hezbollah, Hamas, the PKK, mutations of the KLA, the FARC, AUC, Taliban, HIG, IMU, and a growing number of terrorist cells in this hemisphere and across the globe. We do not even need to utter the word Afghanistan - portions of some of these groups are amply financed by our own drug abuse right here in the US.

So, despite successes, we face a challenge as meaningful and compelling as any the nation has wrestled with in decades. We have not found a cure for cancer, and have not convinced all Americans to stop committing any number of felonies, but we continue to try. We continue to try here, and must do so with open eyes, open hearts and vigilance. **We can improve. But we should not forget that the battle for hearts and minds that decidedly reject drug abuse and drug-related crime at home, here in America, has been joined and to good effect. That same battle, on multiple fronts has been joined to good effect abroad. We must not give up past methods or gains in the process of finding better ways to engage and protect people.**

**(3) America needs to focus on both sides of the drug abuse and drug crime phenomenon -- adequately and sustainably supporting both the health and law**

***enforcement sides of our personal, family, community, state and federal anti-drug effort.*** To minimize the role of either law enforcement- often dubbed the supply side, since the aim is to deter drug production and trafficking -- or the health-related requirements including prevention and treatment costs, the so-called demand side -- would in my view by a sudden turn for the worse. Moreover, to minimize either deterrence and what it takes to deter drug-related crime or health and prevention, would be reckless.

***(4) Drug legalization is a non-starter, period. The economics of drug abuse - written large and small - are against anything like legalization.*** To gain new perspective, just ask Sweden or the non-addicted people in any country where drug availability has risen. More drugs means more addiction, higher health care costs, lower educational performance, more property and personal crimes committed on drugs -- which are six times as likely as crimes committed to get drugs, more domestic abuse, and a degradation in a variety of related health indicators, from inhibitions against unprotected sex to shared drug needles. What is more, the nature of addictive commodities and sliding price elasticity of demand for drugs, means that any legislation widening availability and use, will accelerate emotional and physical damage to the very youth we hope in so many other ways to protect. To that, add the persistence of a drug black market, both empirically and because addiction means there will always be a black market until the day when drugs like heroin are given away at 100 percent purity in unlimited quantity. In short, the case is a slam dunk against drug decriminalization or legalization or harm reduction - and the irresponsibility of discussing it as a real option is tantamount to discussing some other way in which we might legally conspire to victimize and deceive our nation's young people so as to pay our way -- which would not happen either -- out of state or federal debt. No, there are no saving graces to promoting drug abuse. Full stop.

***(5) Hope springs eternal for ways to save and protect young lives, improve everything from education to deterrence. This Congress and this Drug Czar and president have a chance to show real leadership in the drug war, whether you prefer to talk about the anti-violence and pro-law enforcement end of the policy spectrum or the pro-health care end ...*** The spectrum, like any criminal issue with health consequences, from rape and maiming to assault and intentional infliction of emotional distress, is a continuous, unbroken, integrally-related circle. Trying to fix the health consequences residing on one side of the circle without deterring the behavior and means that create the opportunity and promote the ill-health consequences is to miss the point. Both sides of this battle need our attention - we must minimize supply and access, deter trafficking and distribution, while educating and treating the wounded. Sadly, this is not simply a drug war or a drug epidemic - it is both a drug war on those organized to victimize with weapons and narcotics as their means, and it is an epidemic for those caught in the web of use, dependence and addiction. We must stop creating straw men for the satisfaction of speaking a different truth, and recognize that both sides are telling the truth - drug abuse and drug-related violence are one enemy, and they need an

**integrated, earnest, non-political response from those in a position to save that young life - any young life - that will otherwise be needlessly be lost to crime or addiction.**

**That, ladies and gentlemen, is all from me just now. Thank you.**

