

**Prepared Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein
“Countering the Global Narcotics Epidemic – The
United States’ Counternarcotics Strategy”**

June 11, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is the first Drug Caucus hearing in this session of Congress, and I look forward to working with you as the new Chairman.

I’d also like to thank Senator Grassley for his tenure as Chairman, and welcome Senator Rosen.

I’m glad that our first hearing will provide a global overview of the United States’ counternarcotics strategy.

The illicit drug trade is a business, valued at anywhere between \$426 and \$652 billion. Its reach is global. Its distribution is growing. Its leadership is criminal.

Like any business, it adapts to market changes – in this case, U.S. demand and international enforcement – quickly. And its motivation is profit and power at any cost.

In California, the cost was nearly 5,000 lives in 2017. In the United States, it was more than 70,000 lives.

Globally, the cost only increases. In 2015, the latest year for which data is available, it was 450,000 lives.

These estimates do not consider the lives lost due to the violence associated with this illicit trade, both in the United States and in the source and transit countries.

In FY 2019, 22 countries have been identified as major transit or source countries for illicit drugs.

Profits obtained from narcotics production fund dangerous cartels and transnational criminal organizations in Mexico, China, and countries in Central and South America. And their profit margin is only increasing.

Last year, more than 133,000 pounds of heroin, cocaine, meth, and now fentanyl - where two little grains is enough to kill an individual - were seized in the United States. To date this year, nearly 101,000 pounds of these

substances have already been seized, and we're just halfway through the year.

Narcotics production also funds the insurgency in Afghanistan, the world's largest supplier of illicit opium. The United States does not have a dedicated counternarcotics plan in this country, undermining any efforts to negotiate a lasting peace.

The drug trade also fuels staggering levels of violence and corruption. In Mexico, it is estimated that one-third to one-half of the 33,000 murders committed in 2018 were related to drug trafficking and organized criminal activity. Only 21% of these cases went to trial. The former head of Venezuela's military intelligence was recently arrested in Spain on drug trafficking charges on a warrant issued by the United States.

The global narcotics trade requires us to address our own demand issue as well as the foreign supply of illicit drugs. The State Department plays a critical role in these

efforts, as it coordinates U.S. foreign assistance for counternarcotics.

We must strengthen our international partnerships, which are beginning to produce results. For instance:

- Between August 2018 and February 2019, the Colombian government eradicated 40,000 hectares of coca, and seized one million gallons of precursor chemicals and 206 tons of finished cocaine.
- El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama interdicted 12, 22, and 73 metric tons of cocaine, respectively, in 2018.
- China recently controlled fentanyl as a class; and
- Mexico has agreed to work with the United States government on yield studies to provide a more accurate accounting of how much heroin is being produced.

This is good news. But there is more to be done.

We need effective and sustainable approaches to interdiction and eradication.

We must aggressively attack the criminal and financial networks of foreign drug manufacturers and traffickers. These individuals must be arrested and extradited to the United States for trial.

We need to help our international partners strengthen their institutions to prevent corruption and reduce impunity.

We also need to evaluate existing counternarcotics programs to determine if changes are necessary, especially if they are not reducing the flow of illicit drugs.

With this in mind, I look forward to hearing candid assessments from the witnesses about the strengths and weaknesses of our global counternarcotics strategy.

Thank you.

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