



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

DEA Snake Oil

by Jacob G. Hornberger

Don't ever suggest that federal bureaucrats are not smart. Take, for instance, the DEA, the federal agency that has the responsibility of waging the war on drugs, a war that has obviously failed to achieve its objective after 30 years of warfare, not to mention all the collateral violence that the drug war has spawned.

Amidst growing discussion and debate in the mainstream media on the libertarian idea of ending the war on drugs by legalizing drugs, guess what the DEA is using as a way to distract people's attention away from that solution.

Yes, you guessed it! The DEA is employing the magic word, the word that gets everyone's knees a-knockin' — the word that causes them to pull the duct tape out and start sealing their windows — the word that induces them to beg the government to “temporarily” take away their freedoms.

Yes, the DEA is saying that the drug war is necessary because of ... (drum roll) ... terrorism!

Much like the snake-oil salesmen of old, the DEA is [touring the country](#) with a traveling exhibit in which a post-9/11 President Bush waving a flag is juxtaposed with an African-American woman lying in bed next to her baby as she smokes crack cocaine. There are also photos of the noted terrorist Osama bin Laden on the walls of the exhibit alongside noted drug dealer Pablo Escobar.

The irony of all this is that to the extent that there are terrorists financing the operations through drug sales, it's a direct result of the exorbitant profits that the drug war produces, which would disintegrate with legalization. Thus, what the DEA officials fail to realize (or not) is that it is their own war that provides the monies to finance the terrorists. It's just another perverse result of another perverse federal program.

According to the *Washington Post*, the exhibit claims that heroin sales supported the Taliban, while conveniently omitting not only that the Taliban regime opposed heroin production but also that heroin production has soared in the wake of the U.S. government's invasion of Afghanistan to fight terrorism.

Of course, the sad part about this is that many Americans will walk through the exhibit and never figure any of this out. They'll see the photos of 9/11, Osama, Escobar, and drug deals and quickly draw the conclusion that the DEA wants them to reach: "Drugs and terrorism go together. Please keep going with the 30-year war on drugs and the perpetual war on terrorism to protect us from both the drug dealers and the terrorists." It will never occur to some people that it is the U.S. government's own policies — the drug war and an interventionist foreign policy — that have engendered both the drug lords and the terrorist blowback against the United States.

As people fall for the obviously deceptive propaganda, the DEA bureaucrats will cheer because they'll get to keep their budgets, jobs, and salaries as the drug war continues. The drug lords will cheer as well, for the same reason.

Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

This article was originally published in August 2006.