



» Print

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: www.reutersreprints.com.

U.S. should legalize drugs, says former Mexican president Fox

2:27pm EDT

By Jim Forsyth

SAN ANTONIO (Reuters) - Former Mexican President Vicente Fox said this week that the only way to end the drug violence plaguing his country is for the United States to legalize drugs.

"As a country, we are going through problems due to the fact that the United States consumes too many drugs," Fox, who served as Mexico's president from 2000-2006, told reporters Monday night before a speech at the Turkish-American Chamber of Commerce in San Antonio.

"I would recommend to legalize, de-penalize all drugs," Fox added.

He said the drug violence threatens to rip his country apart. It has claimed more than 37,000 lives in Mexico since 2006, when President Felipe Calderon took office and sent the army to combat cartels fighting for smuggling routes to the United States.

President Barack Obama has made it a priority to work with Calderon to curb smuggling over the nearly 2,000-mile border, a lucrative transit point for criminal networks hauling drugs and illegal immigrants north to the United States and guns and billions in cash profits south to Mexico.

Fox said the U.S. drug market generates billions of dollars that are laundered in the United States and flow into Mexico, money that is used to bribe Mexican police officers and government officials and to buy weapons that are brought into Mexico.

"The question is not what is going on in Mexico, but what is going on in the United States," Fox said.

Fox accused U.S. politicians of using his country's bloody drug war as a talking point, while they are unwilling to take the tough steps needed to end it.

"I have never heard President Obama say, 'No more drugs for our kids,'" Fox said. "The U.S. does not want to stop it."

Fox said so many of the Mexican victims are young people between 15 and 24 years old that the country faces a "lost generation" due to the drug war. And, he said, Mexico is paying not only in lives but in investment and in lost income from tourism.

"We don't deserve what we're going through right now," Fox said.

The former president said drug use in the United States is so huge no law can stop it, so American politicians need to take the bold step of legalizing drugs.

He lamented last November's defeat of a ballot measure in California that would have legalized possession of small amounts of marijuana for recreational purposes.

Fox cited the example of Portugal, which decriminalized the possession of drugs for personal use in 2001. He cited a Cato Institute report that drug use is down 25 percent in that country.

"This can be done, and this would separate the issues of crime and violence from the issue of health, which are two separate issues," he said.

He said some of the money being used in the war on drugs could then be used to convince Americans not to use drugs, and on more extensive drug treatment and intervention programs.

(Additional reporting by [Tim Gaynor](#); Editing by Corrie MacLaggan)



© Thomson Reuters 2011. All rights reserved. Users may download and print extracts of content from this website for their own personal and non-commercial use only. Republication or redistribution of Thomson Reuters content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Thomson Reuters. Thomson Reuters and its logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of the Thomson Reuters group of companies around the world.

Thomson Reuters journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: www.reutersreprints.com.