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Fox Says Drug Legalization Will Defeat Drug Cartels in Mexico

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By **Danya P. Hernandez** - As Mexican President Felipe Calderón struggles to fight fire with fire against drug cartels in Mexico, his predecessor said legalizing drugs might be a better strategy.

Washington, D.C. - infoZine - Scripps Howard Foundation Wire - Former President Vicente Fox is a strong advocate of this controversial idea and said his country doesn't need to continue to pay the price.

"Fifty thousand kids from 15 to 25 years old have been killed in the last five years," Fox said Tuesday at Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. "Violence does not defeat violence."

He explained that because Mexico is stuck between some of the largest drug producers, such as Colombia and Venezuela, and the biggest consumer, the U.S., Mexico has been given the job of drug control by the U.S.

The location is ideal for drug cartels, which continuously fight for control of key areas for transportation through Mexico and distribution close to the U.S. border.



Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico, speaks about drug legalization Tuesday at the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. He said it might end the war and bloodshed in Mexico. SHFWire photo by Danya P. Hernandez

Even though legalization poses controversial ethical and moral questions, Fox said the responsibility lies in the hands of parents to educate their children and, ultimately, in the individuals who decide to use drugs.

"Do we really expect that the government will eradicate the drugs from the face of the earth?" Fox asked.

He referred to other countries, including Holland and Portugal, that have adopted legalization of drugs as a method to eradicate illegal trafficking. The 2008 annual report by the Instituto da Droga e da Toxicodependencia I.P. (Institute of the Drug and Toxic Dependency) showed that many categories of illegal drug use among Portuguese teens

decreased during the first five years.

Calderón has been cited as having changed his mind about drug legalization.

“We must do everything to reduce demand for drugs. But if the consumption of drugs cannot be limited, then decision-makers must seek more solutions, including market alternative, in order to reduce the astronomical earnings of criminal organizations,” he said Sept. 29 in a speech at the Americas Society and Council of the Americas in New York.

Mexico does not penalize drug consumption, only its production distribution.

“If something is not done, who knows how Mexico will be after the war,” Fox said.

Fox has been asked why he didn’t propose legalization when he was in office, from 2000 to 2006. He responded that drug violence was simply not as high back then as it is now.

He said the main urgency is to protect citizens who have been directly affected by the violence.

Fox talked about the lack of opportunities for young generations. He said only 22 percent of Mexico’s young adults are attending a university, and the lack of opportunities can encourage them to join drug cartels and organized crime gangs.

“Either they pay with their life, or they work with the cartels,” Fox said.

Mexico’s economy will depend on the education of its young people. As they become the next generation of entrepreneurs, Fox said, they will carry the torch to rebuild the country’s economy.

Fox said it is crucial for the government to be open minded and start making decisions that ensure the well being of the people.

“Mexican society has fear and fear is not a good adviser,” Fox said.