



White House Touts Drops in Cocaine Colombian Production, US Consumption

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A senior White House official on Monday touted declining drug production and consumption levels, but stifled any notion the Obama administration will propose legalizing marijuana to speed the trend.

White House drug control policy chief Gil Kerlikowske says cocaine production in Colombia has dropped 72 percent since 2001, down to 195 metric tons from 700. From 2011 levels, Colombian cocaine production is down 25 percent, Kerlikowske says.

For the first time, Colombia now ranks behind Peru and Bolivia among global cocaine production, the U.S. drug czar says.

That declining rate has as much to do with domestic drug prevention and treatment [programs](#) in Colombia and other Latin American nations as it does to sales of things like helicopters to fight drug cartels in drug producing countries, Kerlikowske says.

Back at home, the White House is touting estimates that cocaine use in the U.S. is down 39 percent since 2006.

Minutes after Kerlikowske announced the figures during a forum in Washington, he fielded the inevitable question: Will the Obama administration take any steps to or endorse the legalization of marijuana in the United States?

"Legalization isn't going to solve our drug problem," the drug control chief says.

Problem is a favorite word for Kerlikowske. Since taking office in 2009, he has refused to continue decades of practice of referring to the federal government's fight against narcotics as a "war."

"It's a mistake to call it a war," he says, "because that lends itself to a simple solution."

Whatever label is applied to America's anti-drug effort, it has had no shortage of critics.

The CATO Institute, for instance, has estimated the drug fight "squanders" \$88 billion annually. CATO scholars ran the numbers and determined the drug battle costs the federal government—as well as ones at the state and local level—over \$41

billion. It also keeps about \$47 billion out of their respective coffers that would be collected if certain drugs were legalized, CATO found.

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