

# Drugs and Terrorism

On **February 25, 2002**, the CSIS Americas Program sponsored a conference on **Drugs and Terrorism**. Mr. John P. Walters, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), outlined President Bush's new Drug Control Strategy, unveiled by the White House on February 12, 2002, and explained the ONDCP views on the link between illicit drugs and terrorism.

**John P. Walters** who was sworn in as the Director of the ONDCP on December 7, 2001, explained the three core principles set forward by the Bush Administration to reduce drug use and save thousands of young lives in America.

1. Stopping drug use before it starts, by increasing funding for education and community-level action. This includes, an aggressive advertisement and media campaign to raise awareness about the implications of drug use in funding terrorist activities across the globe, as well as the potential health risks it presents for young users.
2. Healing America's drug users, by increasing spending on drug treatment, and by helping people overcome substance-dependency-denial through community and faith-based programs.
3. Disrupting the Market. Mr. Walters acknowledged that the supply and demand sides of the problem grow in balance. It is necessary to attack the domestic economic base of the drug trade through greater cooperative and combined efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement, while continuing to target the supply of illegal drugs in the source countries.

Mr. Walters recognized that the close connection between terrorism and illicit drugs is more relevant to the lives of Americans in light of the recent events, since it poses a threat to the individual freedoms and the democratic institutions of peoples and countries around the world. The American "Drug Czar," used Afghanistan and Colombia as examples of countries where drug business has been somewhat successful in shaping or destabilizing government institutions effectively providing a fertile ground for terrorist organizations and the drug trade. He emphasized, that illicit drugs are not the only source of terrorist activities, but that they are a link in a mutually beneficial relationship by money, tactics, geography and politics. Out of the 28 terrorist organizations identified by the U.S. government, 12 have been proven to have links to the illicit drug business.

In addition, Mr. Walters identified other key factors that can help the U.S. in the wars against drugs and terrorism: Integrating law enforcement resources; increasing control over the money trail; fostering economic development to reduce poverty; promote trade initiatives and legal markets; and "knowing where to draw the line" when groups such as the FARC and AUC (in Colombia) are cross designated as terrorist organizations, drug-traffickers, and insurgencies.