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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING ON "THE DRUG TRADE AND THE TERROR NETWORK"

October 3, 2001

Mr. Chairman,

I want to join you in welcoming Director Bach from the State Department and our esteemed former colleague Asa Hutchinson for appearing before the subcommittee today. This is our first opportunity to hear from the newly-minted DEA Administrator, and just as surely as we look forward to hearing his insights, we also regret that his first appearance before this subcommittee comes under such irregular and horrible circumstances.

Mr. Chairman, the horrific September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon sent our nation -- and indeed the entire civilized world -- a wake-up call like no other. The sophistication, coordination and scale of the attacks left no doubt that there were many actors and ample financial and other resources behind the attacks. Accordingly, this massive aggression against the United States immediately intensified U.S. determination to identify the various sources of support for international terrorist organizations that are clearly hellbent on undermining the American way of life by instilling fear among our people. One of those sources we know to be drug trafficking.

As President Bush pronounced before a rare joint session of Congress, the

United States has been thrust by the events of September 11th into a new kind of war. A war in which disrupting supply chains is as much about freezing private financial assets as bombing bridges. A war that is as much about law enforcement as military action. The role of the drug trade in financing and supporting the enemy in this new war means that there will be an important role for the Drug Enforcement Administration to play. Increasingly, we are bound to find that the foreign enemies in the War on Drugs and those in the new War on Terrorism are identical, or at least intertwined: accomplices in one another's crimes. Underscoring this is the fact that bin Laden and many of his ideological disciples evidently view drug-trafficking not merely as a fundraising and networking tool, but as constituting, in and of itself, a weapon of mass destruction against Western societies.

We talk a lot about the awful prospect of biological and chemical weapons being unleashed upon an unsuspecting American public, Mr. Chairman; but a visit to my district will confirm that, whether or not it was conceived as such, a bio-chemical weapons attack on the U.S. has long since begun, and it has been effective in destroying untold lives in communities throughout the nation. To the extent drug trafficking is now being used by terrorists for the express purpose of inflicting harm on societies, it seems to me we are seeing not only a mutually dependent relationship between distinct types of criminal actors and activities, but, moreover, a convergence of threats.

What we have begun to see in Colombia reinforces this notion. In just the past few weeks, we've seen two IRA explosives experts arrested for assisting the FARC and heard the recorded voice of a FARC leader issuing an explicit threat of

attacks on American civilians wherever they may be found -- including on American soil. All of this, Mr. Chairman, speaks clearly to how much the exportation of drugs and terror are becoming intertwined. As you have indicated, we will not be getting into prospective approaches that may bear on national security concerns today. But it seems clear to me that the DEA's intelligence and expertise in identifying, tracking and disrupting drug-trafficking cells must be brought to bear in concert with the many other weapons being employed in America's new war.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses.