

On 40th Anniversary Of War On Drugs, Cops Decry Obama's Drug Policy



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WASHINGTON -- Forty years after President Richard Nixon first declared a war on drugs, the officers who fought in it are calling for a truce.

Former law enforcement officials gathered in the District of Columbia on Tuesday to announce their [new report](#). It details the failures of the government's long battle against illegal drugs and denounces the Obama administration's current drug policies.

"Since President Nixon declared 'war on drugs' four decades ago, this failed policy has led to millions of arrests, a trillion dollars spent and countless lives lost, yet drugs today are more available than ever," said Norm Stamper, former chief of police in Seattle and a speaker for legalization-advocacy group Law Enforcement Against Prohibition.

"President Obama's drug officials keep saying they've ended the 'drug war,'" the LEAP member said. "But our report shows that's just not true, and we'll be hand-delivering a copy to the drug czar in hopes he'll be convinced to actually end this war, or at least stop saying he already has."

The officers' announcement came just weeks after the Global Commission on Drugs -- which includes former United Nations chief Kofi Annan and past presidents of Mexico, Brazil and Colombia -- released a report urging a non-criminal approach to world drug policy.

The commission's recommendations were [reportedly dismissed](#) by both the Obama administration and the government of Mexico. With the support of the United States, Mexican President Felipe Calderón began a crackdown on drug cartels in 2006.

The intensification of the war on drugs in Mexico has led to nearly 40,000 deaths in turf battles, the LEAP report notes. From 2009 to 2010, drug-related killings in that country increased by 60 percent.

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The Obama administration's drug czar Gil Kerlikowske declared a ceasefire over two years ago. But [critics say](#) that what he really wanted to end was the war analogy in U.S. drug policy.

With their new report, members of LEAP hoped to take on the administration for "ramping up a drug war it claims it ended." But they had to leave their grievances at the door.

When LEAP officers tried to deliver a copy of their recommendations to the the former Seattle police chief who now heads the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Kerlikowske refused to meet with them. Instead, he sent a staffer to the lobby to receive the document.

ONDCP spokesman Rafael Lemaitre responded to HuffPost in an email Wednesday night: "This Administration has been clear that our Nation's drug problem is a public health threat that we cannot arrest our way out of," he said. "Our new public health approach to drug control emphasizes education and treatment. In fact today, the Federal Government spends more on drug education and treatment than on law enforcement in the U.S."

From ONDCP's response statement:

- This year, the U.S. Federal Government spent over \$10 billion on drug education and treatment – more than on domestic law enforcement (\$9.2 billion).
- Drug Legalization runs counter to a public health approach to policy because research shows that illegal drug use is associated with voluntary treatment admissions, fatal drugged driving accidents, and emergency room admissions.
- We have been clear that we cannot arrest our way out of the drug problem. In August 2010, the President signed the fair sentencing act which reduces the disparity in the amounts of powder cocaine and crack cocaine required for the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences and eliminates the mandatory minimum sentence for simple possession of crack cocaine.

"It wasn't hard to put together a report showing how the Obama administration continues to wage the failed 'war on drugs' even while pretending to end it," said Stamper. "Although President Obama has talked about respecting states' rights to enact medical marijuana laws, his [Drug Enforcement Administration] has raided state-legal medical marijuana providers at a higher rate than under the Bush administration."

