

Venezuela Accuses U.S. DEA of Being a “Drug Cartel”

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Mérida, May 8, 2007 (venezuelanalysis.com)— The Venezuelan government responded yesterday to United States Drug Czar John Walters’ criticisms that Venezuela is not cooperating with the United States in the fight against drugs by saying that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency is a “drug cartel.” The Venezuelan government rejected Walters’ statements, saying that the U.S. has the intention of damaging Venezuela’s reputation and intervening in its affairs.

John Walters, who is the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in Washington, made the statement in an interview with the Colombian magazine *Semana* last week. And today in Brussels, Walters made further statements about Venezuela at a meeting with the European Union and NATO about drug-related issues. Walters warned of an increasing problem with cocaine entering Europe from South America, and in particular from Venezuela.

“Venezuela is gaining importance for drug dealers,” said the US Drug Czar. “There are flights from legal airports to Dominican Republic and Haiti. Sea shipments are dispatched from several points on the Venezuelan coast.”

But the Venezuelan government rejected the claims made by Walters, saying it was an attempt to discredit anti-drug efforts in Venezuela. Minister of the Interior Pedro Carreño warned that the recent declarations are a new attempt to intervene in Venezuela with the intention of putting military bases in Venezuelan territory.

“The United States establishes cooperation agreements in the fight against drug trafficking through economic cooperation so that they can later impose the presence of military bases under the pretense of cooperation,” said Carreño yesterday.

Carreño dismissed any possibility of permitting the intervention of US authorities in Venezuela to fight drug trafficking and accused the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) of forming its own “drug cartel.” According to the Carreño, when Venezuela ended its cooperation with the DEA two years ago, they observed that the US agency was trafficking drugs through the country.

“They were making a large quantity of drug shipments under the pretense of monitoring them, and they didn’t carry out arrests or breakup the cartels,” explained Carreño. “We were able to determine the presence of a new drug cartel in which the United States Drug Enforcement Agency was monopolizing the shipment of drugs,” he said.

Carreño assured that Venezuelan security forces are willing to receive information that the United States can offer in order to detain drug traffickers in the country, but he maintained that Venezuela “is not going to allow them to carry out operations in our territory.”

“Venezuela is a free, independent country that has its own National Armed Forces and security forces to provide protection to our country, and we are not going to let some other Armed Forces come to our government and impose on us the presence of military bases,” stated Carreño.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez ordered an end to the country’s cooperation with the DEA in 2005, alleging that some members of the agency were infiltrating government intelligence and were a threat to the security of the country. Since then, Washington has made repeated accusations about drug trafficking in Venezuela, claiming that their lack of cooperation is allowing drugs to be passed through the country and into the United States.

The Venezuelan government, however, sees these declarations as an attempt to coerce them into allowing US intervention in the country. Venezuela insists that if the United States government is sincerely concerned about fighting drugs, it should lead by example and protect its own borders from illegal drugs.

“Just like they ask Venezuela to do flyovers under the excuse that this is a drug trafficking route, they should use their Air Force to flyover their own airspace,” said Carreño.

Carreño suggested that instead of continuing the supposed anti-drug program Plan Colombia, that the United States “should apply a Plan Washington, New York, or Miami, so that they flyover their own air space, and take care of their coast and border because 85% of the drugs that are produced in Latin America go to the United States.”

Just as other South American countries have suggested, Venezuela insists that the United States could best fight drug production in Latin America by lowering the demand for drugs inside the United States.

“By the law of the market, if you reduce the demand, you reduce the production,” said Carreño

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