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As UN Orders Expanded Global Drug War, Critics Fight Back

Despite [openly admitting the failure of prohibition](#) by conceding that drug use has not declined after decades of United Nations-mandated “war on drugs” policies, the UN and its mostly totalitarian member regimes have been meeting this week (March 11-15) in Vienna, Austria, seeking to [expand the controversial drug war even further](#). Critics of the dubious UN “Commission on Narcotic Drugs” (CND) schemes, however — ranging from a coalition of American law enforcement officers to Latin American heads of state — are increasingly calling for new approaches to the problem.



Among the most prominent and vocal opponents of the UN’s ongoing narcotics machinations is Socialist Bolivian President Evo Morales (shown), who [slammed](#) the global prohibition regime as a failure. Even former Soviet Communist diplomat-turned planetary drug czar Yury Fedotov, executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC), admitted as much when he said “the overall prevalence of drug use is not decreasing.” Morales, however, went much further.

Speaking to the 56th session of the UN CND on Monday, the fiery South American leader said the international war has caused soaring violence and is being used as an “instrument of geopolitical domination.” In typical fashion, Morales also took swipes at the U.S. government, which [under Obama has expanded its ruthless, unconstitutional campaign of terror throughout Latin America](#) under the guise of fighting the UN-mandated drug war. Morales slammed what he termed the “political use” of the drug war by “certain powers.”

Over a year ago, the Bolivian government, led by Morales, unilaterally withdrew from the UN “Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs” because the treaty purported to prohibit the use of the coca leaf, which has a long history in the region among indigenous people even though it is now often used to manufacture cocaine. At the latest global summit, held from March 11 to 15, the Bolivian leader continued his crusade against what he called the failed approach to dealing with the narcotics trade.

“Every day there are more drugs on the markets, every day there are more weapons spurring social violence, every day more money from crime is covered up by banking secrecy,” Morales [told](#) the assembled delegates at the annual UN summit on drugs, pointing out the obvious. “Illegal drugs constitute the third most profitable industry in the world after food and oil, according to a United Nations report, with an annual estimated value of \$450 billion completely under the control of criminals.”

While Morales was busy denouncing the UN-mandated drug war, a prominent U.S.-based organization known as [Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#) (LEAP) was in Vienna making its case for total



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legalization of all drugs. The increasingly influential coalition of lawmen — judges, prosecutors, police officers, and others; people who have served on the front lines of the “war” and know what it really is — sent a four-member delegation to the UN summit.

LEAP Executive Director Neill Franklin, a 34-year law enforcement veteran of the Maryland State Police and Baltimore Police Department, says that ending drug prohibition would reduce violence, eviscerate the cartels, protect taxpayers, and more. He told *The New American* that UN mandates on the drug war were having a negative effect, and that it was time to call it quits when it comes to having the international organization ordering national governments to wage endless war on unapproved substances.

“We live in a global society in which each country is impacted by the actions of every other. This is particularly true in the war on drugs where the mandates of the UN system of drug prohibition greatly restrict the types of reforms countries can enact,” Franklin explained in an e-mail. “We’re talking about a quickly adaptable multinational system of trade powered by forces that are more powerful than some countries — and a substantial part of the national economy of others.”

According to Franklin, the time has come to have a global conversation about what works and what does not. Clearly, as even UN ODC boss and former Soviet diplomat Fedotov himself admitted in his opening remarks at the summit, the drug war — despite trillions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives squandered in recent decades — has not reduced drug use. For Franklin and LEAP, then, the world needs to explore alternatives to dealing with drug problems other than prohibition.

Asked why the global war on drugs was not the best solution, Franklin pointed to alcohol prohibition in the 1920s. “When we think of that era, we generally think of two images: gangsters with machine guns and speakeasies filled to overflowing. It’s the same today,” he explained. “The prohibition of drugs creates enormous profits that fund the street gangs and cartels that control the trade. Simultaneously, it gives them an incentive to violence in protecting that trade.”

Even as the UN-mandated war rages on, drug usage remains widespread and narcotics are becoming more and more dangerous. The law enforcement and judicial systems, meanwhile, are too overburdened by drug prosecutions to focus on violent crime, with taxpayers paying more money for fewer results, Franklin said. It is time, therefore, for a new approach.

“Our original request to the UN was quite modest,” the head of LEAP continued. “We wrote each delegate a letter asking them merely to allow a free and open discussion of all the policy alternatives that exist. Ultimately, we would like to see countries given greater autonomy to decide their own policy choices.” Based on what has been going on at the week-long summit, however, it appears that the [UN wants to further centralize the planetary drug regime](#).

Franklin also mentioned Morales, who spoke to the more than 1,000 UN session attendees about how much better his nation’s drug policies had become since the Bolivian government withdrew from the 1961 UN narcotics treaty in 2011. Bolivia has also refused to cooperate with the [increasingly militarized “war on drugs” being waged by the Obama administration throughout Latin America](#), earning its leader widespread praise in the region and worldwide despite his largely destructive socialist policies on other issues.

“We know the system of prohibition the UN now mandates is not working,” Franklin said. “If, rather than being confined to this single, failing model, nations in open conversation with the UN were able to find the right system of regulation and control that works, works best for them, the harms associated



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with drug use and control could be greatly lessened.”

Critics of the failed UN-mandated prohibition approach often point to Portugal, which decriminalized all drugs — everything from marijuana to cocaine and heroin — about a decade ago. Studies show that since then, drug abuse [has been cut in half already](#). Drug-related crime has also plummeted. Indeed, around the world, and especially in Latin America and parts of Europe, the Portuguese model is being seen as increasingly promising — especially when compared to the unconstitutional U.S. drug war mandated by the UN [in direct conflict with the American Constitution](#).

Other elements that came under fierce criticism at the Vienna summit were [outlandish UN claims that U.S. states were not free](#) to set their own policies on marijuana. Citing invalid international treaties purporting to mandate a planetary war on drugs, the global body’s top drug warriors [blasted voters in states like Colorado and Washington](#) for legalizing the controversial plant for recreational use.

Even the 20 or so states that have nullified unconstitutional federal statutes by approving cannabis for medicinal use were attacked by the UN, which claimed it “warned” the Obama administration to crack down on the phenomenon. However, as [Thomas Jefferson](#) and the [U.S. Supreme Court](#), among others, have explained, the federal government [cannot expand its powers simply by ratifying treaties](#), and the Constitution does not provide any authority to regulate substances — that is why alcohol prohibition required an amendment.

More troubling even than the lawlessness involved, perhaps, is the [growing body of evidence](#) suggesting that elements of the U.S. government itself are at the heart of the international narcotics trade. Top American officials, drug cartel bosses, Latin American leaders, and more [have all suggested](#) that the U.S. federal government is, at the very least, involved in the drug trade, and has been for decades.

The scandal surrounding operation Fast and Furious, in which the Obama administration was [caught providing heavy weapons to certain Mexican drug cartels](#), certainly did not help to ease suspicions. Numerous other explosive revelations in recent years — [DEA laundering drug money](#), for example — have continued adding fuel to the fire. Americans, meanwhile, have rightly become concerned, especially considering the fact that the United States has more prisoners than any nation on Earth, mostly for non-violent drug offenses.

While the UN may think it can [order the cooperative Obama administration](#) to continue enforcing unconstitutional statutes in defiance of voters, the Constitution, and state law, criticism of global prohibition is growing by leaps and bounds as governments seek alternative ways to deal with drug problems. Polls [show](#), for example, that most Americans now favor legalizing marijuana, and at the federal level at least, the Constitution demands it. Critics say the UN’s insistence on [waging more and more war despite its admitted failure](#) is likely to further discredit the dictator-dominated organization in the United States and worldwide.

Photo of Bolivian President Evo Morales speaking to the press at the UNODC conference in Vienna, Austria March 11: AP Images

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