

international illegal drug production and trafficking seriously. That it make this concern a matter of national interest. And that, in conjunction with our efforts here and abroad, other countries do their part in stopping production and transit. Imagine that. A requirement that we and others should take illicit drug production and transit seriously. That we should do something concrete about it. And that, from time to time, we should get an accounting of what was done and whether it was effective.

I do not read in this requirement the problem that many seem to see. This requirement is in keeping with the reality of the threat that illegal drugs pose to the domestic well-being of U.S. citizens. Illegal drugs smuggled into this country by criminal gangs resident overseas kill more Americans annually than all the terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens in the past 10 years. It is consistent with international law. And it is not unusually burdensome on the administration—apart from holding it to some realistic standard of accountability.

I know that administrations, here and abroad, are uncomfortable with such standards. But that shilly shally should not be our guide. Congress has a constitutional foreign policy responsibility every bit as fundamental as the President's. Part of that responsibility is to expect accountability. The certification process is a key element in that with respect to drugs.

To seek to retreat from the responsibility because an administration does not like to be accountable is hardly sufficient ground for a change. To do so because another country does not like explaining how it is doing in cooperating to deal with a serious threat to U.S. national interests is equally unacceptable. To argue that we should cease judging others because we have yet to do enough at home is a logic that borders on the absurd. To believe that claims of sovereignty by some country trumps external judgment on its behavior is to argue for a dangerous standard in international law. To argue that we should bury our independent judgment on this matter of national interest in some vague multilateralized process is a confidence trick.

Try putting this argument into a different context. Imagine for a moment making these arguments with respect to terrorism. Think about the consequences of ignoring violations of human rights because a country claims it is unfair to meddle in internal matters.

When it comes to drugs, however, some seem prepared to carve out an exception. It offends Mexico, so let's not hold them accountable. The administration will not be honest, so let's stop making the judgment.

The administration, we are informed, does not want to offend an important

ally. Really? Well, it seems the administration likes to pick and choose. At the moment, the administration is considering and threatening sanctions against the whole European Union—that is some of our oldest allies. And over what issue? Bananas. To my knowledge, not a single banana has killed an American. However serious the trade issue is that is involved, major international criminal gangs are not targeting Americans with banana peels. They are not smuggling tons of bananas into this country illegally. They are not corrupting whole governments.

So, what we are being asked to accept is that sanctions are an important national interest when it comes to bananas but not for drugs. That it is okay to judge allies on cooperation on tropical fruit but not on dangerous drugs. This strikes me as odd. Do not get me wrong. I am not against bananas. I believe there are serious trade issues involved in this dispute over bananas. What strikes me as odd is that the administration is prepared to deploy serious actions against allies over this issue but finds it unacceptable to defend U.S. interests when it comes to drugs with similar dedication and seriousness.

But let me come back to Mexico and certification. I have two observations. The first concerns the requirements for certification. I refer again to the law. That is a good place to start. The requirement in the law is to determine whether a country is fully cooperating. It is not to judge whether a country is fully successful.

Frankly, that is an impossible standard to meet. One that we would fail. I agree, that deciding what full cooperation looks like is a matter of judgment. But to those who argue that certification limits the President's flexibility, on the contrary, it gives scope to just that in reaching such a decision. It is a judgment call. Sometimes a very vexed judgment.

Nevertheless, one can meet a standard of cooperation that is not bringing success. In such a case, an over-reliance upon purely material standards of evaluation cannot be our only guide. How many extraditions, how many new laws, how many arrests, how many drugs seized are not our only measures for judgment. There are others. And in the case of Mexico there is a major question that must be part of our thinking.

Unless the United States can and is prepared unilaterally to stop drug production and trafficking in Mexico, then we have two choices. To seek some level of cooperation with legitimate authority in Mexico to give us some chance of addressing the problem. Or, to decide no cooperation is possible and to seal the border. The latter course, would involve an immense undertaking and is uncertain of success. It would

also mean abandoning Mexico at a time of crisis to the very criminal gangs that threaten both countries. In my view, we cannot decertify Mexico until we can honestly and dispassionately answer this question: Is what we are getting in the way of cooperation from Mexico so unacceptable on this single issue that our only option is to tear up our rich and varied bilateral relationship altogether?

However frustrating our level of cooperation may be, I continue to think that we have not reached the point of hopelessness. And there are encouraging signs along with the disappointments. Having said this, I do not believe that we can or should forgo judgment on the continuing nature of cooperation. With Mexico or with any country. To those who would change the certification process I would say, let's give the process a chance not a change. Let's actually apply it. This does not mean in some rote way. But wisely. With understanding. With due regard to both the nuance of particular situations and a sense of responsibility.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY FOR FISCAL 1998—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 17

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by the provisions of section 504(h) of Public Law 98-164, as amended (22 U.S.C. 4413(i)), I transmit herewith the 15th Annual Report of the National Endowment for Democracy, which covers fiscal year 1998.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, March 18, 1999.

REPORT OF THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 18

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message