

Bush's drug strategy worries Rangel

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Welcoming President Bush's release of the National Drug Strategy Update, Thursday Jan. 25, Congressman Charles Rangel, chairman of the House Narcotics Committee, said: "However, I have serious concerns about several aspects of the strategy update."

Both the mid-year update and appointment of a national drug coordinator or "Drug-Czar" were mandated by the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, Rangel noted.

But he was concerned that "there is nothing in the updated strategy which addresses the root cause of drug abuse." And Coordinator William Bennett in his introduction even treats "the causes of this phenomenon" as irrelevant.

"Apparently Director Bennett and President Bush fail to see that until the root cause of drug abuse are addressed, the

scourge of drugs will continue and expand," the Chairman continued. He listed such causes as "the lack of education, housing, employment, health care, family and above all poverty."

"The need to attack the root causes of drug abuse can not be overlooked," he stated. "There is nothing in the strategy that provides a call to the cabinet to develop creative policies and programs that address" them.

Next Rangel turned to funding in which the President set down \$10.6 billion for fiscal year '91, "from over \$9 billion" in FY '90 ending Sept. 30; an increase of about \$1.5 billion.

Holding the Bush funding figures as inadequate, Rangel called for more funds to expand the war on drugs "on all fronts." This would include pressing social problems that directly relate to drug abuse.

He also opposed the President's call for the death penalty in drug cases. That would



CONG. CHARLES RANGEL

sidetrack the war on drugs and bring "very little impact" to bear on the real problem, he said.

"We even had to tell Noriega he would not be subject to a death penalty to arrange his surrender. If it is right to wave the death penalty for interna-



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tional drug traffickers like Noriega, it is just as right for American traffickers as well," the Harlem legislator stated.

Rangel noted that the strategy recommends additional resources for treatment, education and prevention. However it failed to indicate "what

we need to do, what actually works or where funding should be targeted toward specific, successful kinds of programs."

On the international sphere, the Congressman said he was pleased at the implementation of the Andean Strategy which his Committee had advocated. He hoped that when President Bush attends the Andean Summit in February, he would put emphasis on supply as much as on demand, to bring the Andean countries into full cooperation in ending drug exports.

The chairman was pleased with the involvement of the military "as a full partner in the war on drugs" as proposed in the Bush strategy. But he urged that any military action be supported by the nation involved as well as the OAS and UN.

And he warned too, that the U.S. "must be on the lookout" for new and old drugs coming from Asia which his Committee visited this January.