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## United States Senate

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March 16, 1999

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Foreign Operations  
United States Senate  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Ranking  
Subcommittee on Foreign Operations  
United States Senate  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you approach markup of the FY2000 Foreign Operations Appropriation Bill, I respectfully request your consideration and support for an initiative, which is very important to my state and provides an alternative means for implementing the National Drug Control Strategy of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The Department of State, through its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), will have the responsibility for coordination and implementation of this program.

This counterdrug initiative uses mycoherbicides to combat illicit narcotic cultivation. The mycoherbicide process is as follows:

- Strains of fungi are isolated, characterized and formulated into mycoherbicides;
- Prior to application, the mycoherbicide will undergo extensive testing on a variety of indigenous plants and wildlife to verify host-specificity;
- Mycoherbicides will be applied by aircraft which are capable of flying at altitudes high enough to be out of range of gunfire;
- Once deployed, the natural disease establishes and destroys the narcotic crop; and
- Mycoherbicides will remain in the soil for an extensive period and prevent the future growth of narcotic crops in that area.

In addition, the program will also assist the participating nations with alternative crop development, such as cocoa and coffee.

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I regard this program as a priority in the effort to eradicate illegal drugs. General Barry McCaffrey, Director of the ONDCP, also supports this initiative and has stated, "The elimination of illicit coca and opium cultivation is the best way to reduce the cocaine and heroin availability."

I wish to respectfully request your support for the appropriation of the following initiative:

Increase the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the Department of State (INL/DOS) by \$10 million for counterdrug research and development that will fund the following: mycoherbicide product research and development; narcotic crop eradication technologies; narcotic plant identification and biotechnology; worldwide narcotic crop identification; and alternative crop research and development. Specifically, the \$10 million for mycoherbicide related research and development activities will focus on the following areas: fermentation; formulation; registration; field testing; foreign laboratories; mycology; dispersal technology; and response "Red" teams.

I urge you to support this important program. As illegal narcotic crops continue to cross our borders and threaten the health and welfare of American citizens, we view this program as a priority that can significantly reduce the production of these crops. This program is a prime example of how leveraging INL dollars toward critical research and development of mycoherbicides will support and make significant improvements to the national drug control policy.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,



Conrad Burns  
United States Senator