

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **November 30, 2001**

Why did police arrest 734,498 pot-smokers — instead of tracking murderous terrorists?

Could September 11 have been prevented if police had focused on terrorists?

WASHINGTON, DC — American law enforcement is guilty of something close to “criminal neglect” for arresting 734,498 people for marijuana violations last year — instead of investigating and stopping murderous terrorists, the Libertarian Party said today.

“Thousands of innocent Americans may be dead because law enforcement considered it more important to raid college frat parties and arrest people for smoking marijuana than to find and stop the deadly terrorist ‘sleeper’ cells that were plotting the greatest mass murder in American history,” said Steve Dasbach, the party’s national director.

“You just have to wonder: If the tens of thousands of law enforcement officers, the millions of man-hours, and the billions of dollars that were spent monitoring, investigating, arresting, charging, processing, jailing, and bringing to trial non-violent marijuana users had been used, instead, for anti-terrorist activities — could the September 11 atrocity have been prevented?”

That question has become especially crucial now that the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) has released new figures showing that marijuana arrests in 2000 hit an all-time record.

According to figures collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report, police arrested an estimated 734,498 people for marijuana violations last year. That’s up from the 704,812 Americans who were arrested in 1999 on marijuana-related charges.

Of the almost three-quarters of a million people arrested in 2000, approximately 88% — or about 646,042 individuals — were charged only with possession of marijuana.

The most chilling thing about those numbers, said Dasbach, is that every arrest for marijuana represents a “missed opportunity” for law enforcement.

“Local and state police, the FBI, and federal law enforcement agencies have only a finite amount of people, time, and money to investigate and stop crimes,” he noted. “By directing so many of those resources to the War on Marijuana, law enforcement made the ill-advised decision that detecting murderous, fanatical terrorists was less important than arresting non-violent Americans who choose to use marijuana.

“The 4,000 Americans who were killed in the World Trade Center, in the Pentagon, and aboard Flight 93 may have paid the price for that tragically misguided decision.”