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Who's more dangerous: Dope smokers or murderers, rapists, and robbers?

Police arrested more people for marijuana last year than for violent crimes

WASHINGTON, DC — Police are more eager to arrest people for smoking marijuana than for murder, robbery, or rape, according to new figures from the FBI — and that's a criminal misuse of law enforcement resources that puts innocent Americans at risk, the Libertarian Party charged today.

"This is astonishing: Police apparently would rather arrest a person with marijuana in his possession than a sadistic killer with blood on his hands," said Steve Dasbach, the party's national director. "We have to ask: What are these police smoking?"

According to the new FBI Uniform Crime Report, police arrested more people for non-violent marijuana offenses in 1998 than for murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault — *combined*.

In all, 682,885 Americans were arrested last year on marijuana-related charges, while only 676,020 people were arrested for the crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Of those arrested for marijuana offenses, 88% were charged with mere possession.

"These figures are great news for murderers, rapists, and robbers, since police appear to be more interested in arresting someone for smoking marijuana than for committing a cold-blooded killing, a sadistic rape, or a brazen burglary spree," said Dasbach. "This is a clear case of public endangerment — and a tragic waste of criminal justice resources.

"The fact is, every marijuana arrest means there is less police time, less law enforcement money, less court time, and fewer jail cells available to arrest, convict, and imprison violent criminals," he said. "Does that make any sense?"

According to another new study from the Marijuana Policy Project, there have been nearly 3.5 million marijuana arrests since President Bill Clinton took office.

"The next time you hear about a vicious murder, ask yourself: Could the police have prevented this crime if they hadn't devoted millions of dollars and man-hours to arresting those 3.5 million people on marijuana charges over the past six years?" said Dasbach.

"How many people are dead, or raped, or had their possessions stolen, or were savagely beaten, because a local cop was booking a marijuana suspect instead of protecting innocent Americans from evil criminals? That's the real, human cost of these new FBI figures — and the sad price we pay for the government's War on Marijuana."