

UNDCP and US Mislead on Environmental Supervision of Biological Weapons Plan



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Seattle and Hamburg, 10 August - The US Government and the United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) are making misleading statements about international environmental supervision of their program to use biological weapons to eradicate drug crops, according to the Sunshine Project, an international nonprofit working on biological weapons issues.

The USA and UNDCP have repeatedly suggested that the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) may be involved in the plan to use biological weapons against illicit drug crops in the Andes and Asia. But the Sunshine Project has directly confirmed with senior UNEP officials that these suggestions are false.

The UN environment group denies involvement. UNEP says has it not, nor is it currently advising or overseeing the biological weapons work. Moreover, neither the US or UNDCP – the project’s only backers - have even asked UNEP to become involved.

The Sunshine Project raised its concerns that UNEP was being inappropriately cited in reference to the biological weapons work in person with UNEP Director General Klaus Topfer. After contacting several UNEP regional offices, a Special Assistant to the Director General responded that UNEP “is not involved in the mentioned project”.

The dangerous biological weapons work is US conceived and funded; but implemented by UNDCP with the ardent support of its crusading chief, Pino Arlacchi. It is most advanced in Colombia, where UNDCP is pushing to start a contract to test and formulate biological agents to eradicate illicit coca crops. Current negotiating texts of the contract indicate no international standards or oversight will be applied to the formulation and production of the biological agents. Instead, an unknown and small private Colombian company called *Live Systems Technology, S.A.* will provide methodology and weaponization advice.

Thus the biological weapons research, which has recently stirred international controversy, has no independent international environmental oversight. And since Colombia’s own Environment Ministry may abandon its national-level supervisory role to directly engage in research, UNDCP and the US have

WHAT THE US AND UNDCP HAVE SAID

“We’re not going blindfolded into anything and our major concern is to see that this is environmentally safe... after we have asserted, with the help of the United Nations Environment Program, that all this is feasible.”

- Sandro Tucci of UNDCP to BBC World Service, 27 June.

“Use of biological control agents to control narcotic crops ... would be regulated by the United Nations Environmental Program”

– US government response to the Sunshine Project, in a Freedom of Information Act Request, 3 May

“The programme will be developed ... in consultation with UNEP.”

- UNDCP contract offered to Colombia for field testing US-developed bioweapons agents and technology, n.d.

REALITY

“I can inform you that UNEP is at present not involved in the mentioned project...”

- Rob de Jong, Special Assistant to the UNEP Director General in an email to the Sunshine Project, 27 July.

unacceptably been left to their own devices to assess the safety of the dangerous biological agents being developed in the USA, Uzbekistan and, possibly, Colombia.

Both UNDCP and the US have abysmal environmental records of advocating massive aerial spraying of broad spectrum herbicides in some of the world's most biodiverse areas. Spraying is currently being conducted in Asia, Africa, South America, and North America (Mexico).

"It's an environmental façade. UNDCP and the US telling half truths to give a false sense of safety. They're invoking UNEP's name; but haven't bothered to phone Nairobi. If they call UNEP at all, they'll only do it once the project is a fait accompli. It is a foregone conclusion that the drug warriors will decide that what they themselves have developed is safe and legal." says the Sunshine Project's Edward Hammond.

According to the Sunshine Project's Susana Pimiento, *"Before the negotiations with Colombia move one centimeter further and before any more research is designed or conducted, a truly independent intergovernmental review should be conducted to assess safety and treaty compliance issues."*

This review might include experts from UNEP, WHO, FAO, and other UN organizations. These groups should be operating with full power to determine the project's fate. Says Pimiento *"Intergovernmental supervision should not be an afterthought done by vassals of Vienna and Washington, as UNDCP and the US would like. We are confident that a full and transparent review will conclude that this bioweapons project should be stopped. It should have been dropped years ago."*