

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Response to: Senator Grassley

From: Edward Davis Police Commissioner, Boston, Massachusetts

Question 1

In 2010, the number of narcotics-related homicides doubled in the City of Boston. Boston normally averages 8 -10 drug related homicides per year but the year that marijuana was decriminalized, we witnessed an increase to 16 homicides. Also from 2009 to date, the City of Boston experienced an average of 45 home invasions per year. Based upon investigations, these home invasions (approximately 75%) were drug related with a majority centering around the distribution of marijuana.

I attribute three different factors to this increase:

First, marijuana is a commodity, governed by the same rules of supply and demand as any other cash crop. An increase in demand drives prices up and we experienced that here in Boston. This phenomenon led to larger amounts of money moving through the illicit drug markets than had been experienced in the past.

Second, in times of a struggling economy the opportunity for employment becomes significantly reduced. This is especially true for offenders being released from prisons.

And finally, in 2010, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts parole system was broken, returning record numbers of serious offenders to the streets of our city.

These three factors merged to establish an environment where violence was common as hardened criminals worked to establish new drug territories.

Boston also experienced a number of robberies of college aged students who were dealing marijuana. The City of Boston is a college town with the highest density of college students per capita of any American city. Gang members exploited this group of students utilizing firearms to overpower these low level drug dealers and to steal their marijuana and large amounts of cash. Based on my experience, the potential for injury and death is high in these situations.

I believe that the increased demand for marijuana destabilized the drug market and created this public safety challenge.

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Question 2

The Boston Police Department works closely with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as well as other federal partners such as Immigrations, Customs & Enforcement (ICE), the United States Postal Inspections Service and has contacts with several delivery services.

Our work with the DEA has shown that over the past year, there has been an increase in marijuana being shipped from California to Boston. For more specific knowledge of the source of shipment, I would concur with the State of California authorities.

We continue to work with the DEA and other law enforcement agencies to monitor and take action against the illegal distribution and possession of marijuana in the City of Boston.