

**Who spends more on drugs: the U.S. or the EU? Interview on the logic behind the international drugs market with Jim Allen, Regional Director Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) – Europe & Africa – 22 April 2016**

*TRANSCRIPT:*

My name is Jim Allen and I am currently the Regional Director for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for all of Europe and all of Africa.

As most people know the United States is the biggest consumer of everything – both good and bad and I think that when you take a look at the numbers on how much exactly we spend every year, as US citizens on illicit drugs, it will blow your mind.

The recent figures are 100 billion is spent every year on illicit drugs in the United States and if you think about that for a second that is a 100 billion dollars per year that is going to the black market, the illegal markets that sooner or later are going to end up all around the world, funding all kinds of things, including terrorism so that's a big problem and one that we're continuing to face in the United States.

In contrast, Europe also spends a heck of a lot of money on illicit drugs. I think the last numbers that I saw was about 24, 25 billion euro per year. So they are somewhat behind us, we're four times ahead of them but that is the other side of this problem, is that there is so much money going into it from licit to illicit from the user perspective and sometimes I think people don't realize where that money ends up and that's one of the things that we do: is we track that money.

In talking about drugs and where they are the bigger problem, for instance are drugs a bigger problem in the United States, the use of illicit drugs in the United States or the use of illicit drugs in Europe. I think you have to qualify that statement because as we learnt as investigators, drug enforcement investigators back in the 90s, these illicit organizations operate worldwide so drug trafficking is really based upon a worldwide economy meaning that if the drug dealers in South America can get more money pushing their cocaine to Europe instead of the United States that's what they're going to do. So when you look at the numbers we're spending a lot more money in the US on illicit drugs but I think you have to qualify it and say: it's all of our problem, it's all the world's problem and today the market maybe in Europe, tomorrow it will be in the United States.

Obviously they are in it for the money and they are in it for nothing else but the money. And I mentioned earlier that the amount of cocaine going to Europe has increased because they can make more money sending their cocaine to Europe. These are the same organizations that are sending cocaine to the United States but they're sending more of it now to Europe because the US market is saturated. So when a market is saturated in either illegal gotten goods or legitimate goods prices go down. So they can make more money in Europe that they can in the US sending their cocaine.

So, again, it's a world economy, it's a world drug market and it depends on where they make money is where the drugs go and where they get sold.