CITY SUFFERS SMACK' ATTACK AMID TERROR WAR

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WASHINGTON - Heroin shipments to New York are skyrocketing, partly because the Bush administration has shifted resources away from the drug war to the terror war, lawmakers and others charged yesterday.

During a House Government Reform Committee hearing, law-enforcement officials said the war against drugs has suffered from a lack of resources.

"South American heroin traffickers . . . remain a significant threat and will dominate the heroin market in New York for the foreseeable future," said Felix J. Jimenez, head of the Drug Enforcement Administration's New York office. Besides the rising tide of heroin reaching New York, the battle in Colombia to combat heroin and cocaine has suffered on a variety of fronts, ranging from bad weather to attacks on American helicopters and new threats of terrorist raids on oil pipelines.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) said State Department resources were being used to protect oil pipelines from terrorists.

Jimenez said the DEA seized 90 kilograms a year of heroin between 1997 and 2000, but the figure jumped to 199 kilograms in 2001 and 200 kilograms in the 2002 fiscal year.

Rep. Ben Gilman (R-N.Y.) said New York and other cities are experiencing a rise in heroin use partly because the White House drug office, along with the State Department and U.S. Embassy in Bogota, failed to "tackle the heroin program before it got out of control."

"We must learn why and then find out how we can reverse it, and hold people accountable," added Gilman, who recently returned from a congressional visit to investigate Colombia's drug war.

American Black Hawk helicopters and airplanes sent to Colombia to fight the drug trade are being shot down and are crashing at an alarming rate, officials disclosed yesterday.

At least 22 U.S. helicopters have crashed or been shot down by terrorists since 1997, according to Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.).

U.S. officials did not dispute the numbers but said the region is packed with risk.

"It is a very dangerous operating environment in Colombia," said Paul Simons, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for international narcotics law enforcement. "During the last two years our spray pilots took more than 180 hits."

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One name was added yesterday to the medical examiner's list of confirmed dead in the World Trade Center attacks: Vincent Michael Wells, 22.