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## The Coming Police State

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The political dynamics are in play to create a police state in Florida. Correlation and causality are certainly debatable but what is not debate are the forces in play. For the purposes of this discussion, there are three that come to the forefront.

First and foremost is an obsession with crime and punishment. Second is rampant cronyism and corruption. The last is fraudulent elections.

The obsession with crime and punishment is most clearly defined and self-evident. In Florida, the trends of the last forty years have been focused on imprisonment and punishment rather than addressing the causes and taking appropriate preventive measures.

In December 2006, E. T. York, Chancellor Emeritus of the State University System stated in the Gainesville Sun that nationally, Florida ranks fifth place in spending on police protection; 40th in spending for K-12 education; and 50th in spending for higher education. It can be argued there is no connection between the crime and education but what cannot be disputed is that the average educational level of those men and women going to prison is the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Another point that cannot be disputed is that there is no nation in the world that has a higher incarceration ration than the state of Florida.

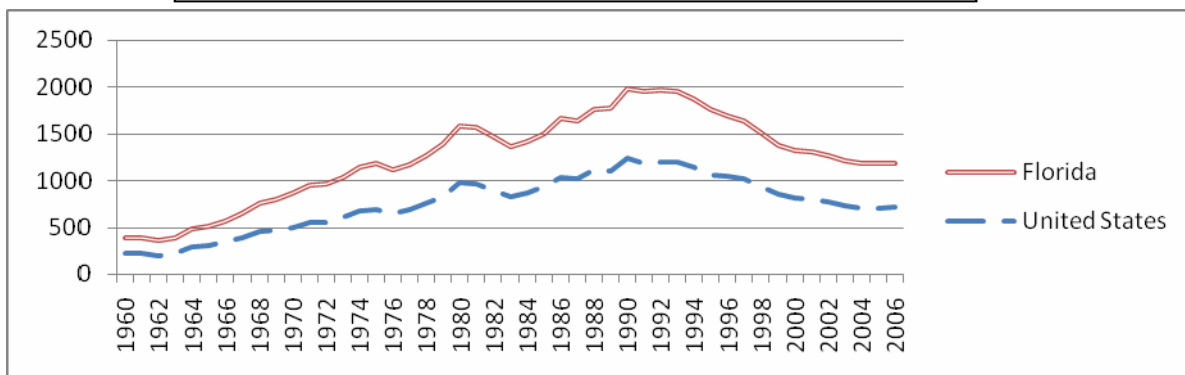
For each of the last ten years, drug crimes were the largest group of prison admissions, was drug. Convictions and sentencing for violent crimes was second place. The focus on drug crimes is predicated more on economics than protecting the citizens of the state.

There is money in the apprehension and incarceration of men and women for drug crimes. Once drug dealers become dysfunctional, careless or successful, they are harvested of their profits by the criminal justice system. Then the prison industrial complex that feeds off their incarceration.

The harvesting of drug offenders by the criminal justice community while a major business is also a major trap in a democracy. When the criminal justice community is dependent on the

A fair question is: are the people in the state of Florida being better served by this distorted and myopic focus on imprisonment and punishment? This political philosophy catapulted Florida to the top of the charts for violent crimes in the 70's and 80's. These trends associated with violent crimes remain true thru today: Florida held 3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2004, 4<sup>th</sup> place in 2005 and the ratios were up 2006 and again in

Violent crime ratios per 100,000 populations in US and Florida



Violent crime ratios

Fueling this obsession with crime and punishment is the political gold of money and votes provided by the criminal justice community at election time. The Policeman's Benevolent Association dumped over \$2 million into the last election cycle. To that we can add the National Rifle Association and the various lawyers associations to not only maintain the status quo but grow it as well.

Cronyism and corruption become the bywords when politicians depend on any powerful lobby group for their electability. A time line from 1999 to 2006 within the Department of Corrections highlights this point. This time line starts with the murder of Frankie Valdez in Florida State Prison to the murder of a fourteen year old boy at the Bay County Sheriff's boot camp. These are murders for which the state held no one accountable.

The trail of cronyisms and/or corruption is woven through the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court, Florida Legislature and through state elections from 2000 to 2006. The state version of justice was to fire those that became conspicuous by their malfeasance in office and indemnify victims prior to findings in civil suites in the federal courts.

Florida has been the national centerfold for traumatic and dramatic controversy during national elections. However, as much trauma and drama as there has been associated with the open election process is the marginalization of potential voters that would dent the leverage of the criminal justice community.

There are close to a million felons that have been denied the vote. They form a natural counter poise to the criminal justice community and prison industrial complex. Makes a person wonder how Maine has ever survived with inmates being able to vote from their cells.

No discussion of a police state would be complete without mention of gun control. What has escaped everyone's attention is that liberal gun laws were necessary because the state could not or would not protect its citizens. They were first passed in 1987 when the Florida was headed into a major crime wave fueled by the war on drugs.

In 1981, it was estimated this was an industry worth between \$7 and \$12 billion dollars a year as opposed to the \$12 billion for real estate and \$9 billion for tourism.<sup>i</sup>

Not to be ignored was the relationship between drug money and real estate development as a money laundering mechanism. It could be argued that illegal drugs became a cash cow for real estate development.<sup>ii</sup>

It is estimated that drug smugglers single-handedly kept Florida out of the tight money recession of 1980s. Miami was the only Federal Reserve Board Branch that reported a cash surplus while every other Federal Reserve Board in the country reported a deficit.

Florida politicians did not have the political will to crack down on the transportation and sale of drugs in Florida in the 1980s. That was the 1980s and what about today? Look to Miami for a clue. You will find and there is a daily American Airlines Flight 914 with bags of Euros that are part of a huge \$1.4 billion cocaine money-laundering scheme.

Would like to close with a quote by C. Gary Moody who is a Gainesville attorney that writes about gun control.: as good as our police are, anyone who abdicates their safety to the police is a fool.<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> An estimated 70% of all marijuana and cocaine imported into the U.S. passes through South Florida. Drug smuggling could be the region's major industry, worth anywhere from \$7 billion to \$12 billion a year (vs. \$12 billion for real estate and \$9 billion for tourism, the area's two biggest legitimate businesses). Miami's Federal Reserve branch has a currency surplus of \$5 billion, mostly in drug-generated \$50 and \$100 bills, or more than the nation's twelve Federal Reserve banks combined. Drug money has corrupted banking, real estate, law enforcement

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,922693-5,00.html>

Trouble in Paradise, Time Magazine Monday, Nov. 23, 1981 By [JAMES KELLY](#)

<sup>ii</sup> The billions in narcobucks, as police have dubbed the drug money, allow its recipients to buy, in cash, \$1 million waterfront homes, \$50,000 Mercedes and \$400 bottles of wine. One drug kingpin alone has bought up some \$20 million worth of prime Miami real estate. Says Miami Financial Analyst Charles Kimball: "Criminals have become conspicuous buyers of some of the best properties in South Florida."

Most, if not all, of Miami's 250 banks have drug money in their accounts. As many as 40 banks still neglect to report cash deposits of \$10,000 or more, as required by law. And at least four banks, according to law enforcement officials, are controlled by drug dealers. Treasury Department investigators have long suspected that some smaller banks, known as Coin-o-Washes among both cops and criminals, were founded primarily to launder money for the drug trade (see box).

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,922693-6,00.html>

Trouble in Paradise, Time Magazine Monday, Nov. 23, 1981 By [JAMES KELLY](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Gainesville Sun, 8A, April 21, 2008