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Trends. On Drugs? Response to the Peruvian Elections

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As of this writing, concerns over an outright stealing of the presidential election in Peru have been temporarily abated. Even with the many documented campaign and electoral "dirty tricks" primarily effected by agents of the incumbent, there will be a run-off between President Alberto Fujimori and Mr. Alejandro Toledo. This is good news to Peruvians and to other observers inside and outside of Peru who value a move towards some notion of fair elections, shared governance, and democracy.

In this context, the response of the head of the United States (US) Office of National Drug Policy and Control, General Barry R. McCaffrey, is most intriguing. As cited in *The New York Times*, he stated that for the US and Peru to cooperate "these elections (must) be viewed both by Peruvians and the international community as having been fair and above board." He also posited that the future would be very uneasy "unless it's demonstrated convincingly to the international community that that's (fair and above board election) what's happening."

These quotes suggest that it is perception not reality that is crucial--not what is happening but what people think is happening. Isn't this a commonly attributed motive for engaging in the use and abuse of illicit drugs? And as perception over reality is espoused, would not the goals of fairness, shared governance, and democracy go up in smoke? (See Fujimori's rival, charging fraud, demands runoff. (April 12, 2000). *The New York Times*, p. A6; Jewell-Lapan, W. (1936). Perception and reality. *Journal of Philosophy*, 33, 365-373; Jussim, L. (1991). Social perception and social reality: A reflection construction model. *Psychological Review*, 98, 54-73; Nettler, G. (1961). Good men, bad men, and the perception of reality. *Sociometry*, 24, 279-294; Rosser, W.W. (1983). Using the perception-reality gap to alter prescribing patterns. *Journal of Medical Education*, 58, 728-732.) (Keywords: Elections, Peru)