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New strategy needed to combat drug traffic, abuse, panel says

By John McCaslin
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Efforts to stop the flow of illicit narcotics across the U.S.-Mexican border are "failing miserably," the head of a congressional panel said yesterday as he called on President Reagan "to assemble the best minds in the country" to develop a new national strategy.

Rep. Charles B. Rangel, chairman of the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, said he will soon introduce legislation to establish a White House Conference on Narcotics Abuse and Control. The bill will be co-sponsored by House Judiciary Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr., a New Jersey Democrat.

The conference, said Mr. Rangel, a New York Democrat, "would plan

a stronger and more effective national strategy in the area of drug abuse control."

He told reporters that while the administration continues calling for programs to reduce the demand for drugs, "out of the entire \$18 billion Education [Department] budget, only \$3 million is allocated for drug abuse education."

His remarks came as the narcotics committee released findings from its recent Southwest Border Study Mission, which examined the rapidly increasing drug trafficking along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

The narcotics committee's ranking minority member, New York Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman, said the Mexican border area is "unguarded." Calling for an immediate

federal response, he said, "Drug traffickers have now opened another major front to flood every city, town and school district in our nation with heroin, cocaine and marijuana."

The committee's report said that, with the limited number of Customs and Immigration personnel, the immense volume of traffic across the border makes it virtually impossible for vehicles, pedestrians and cargo to be inspected, despite reports that the bulk of the heroin and much of the cocaine enters the United States there.

Drug trafficking from Mexico has increased sharply, the committee found. Mexico supplies about 42 percent of the heroin and up to 35 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States, while some 35 percent of the cocaine entering the

United States goes through Mexico, even though no cocaine is thought to be produced there.

The committee said that while the United States should concentrate internally on drug abuse education and prevention, diplomatic pressure must be applied to all drug-producing countries to eradicate crops of illicit narcotics.

Other recommendations are that:

• EPIC, the El Paso Intelligence Center, should become an intelligence center covering all sources of narcotics, and the CIA and National Security Agency should be required to coordinate with the nine federal agencies now providing narcotics intelligence on the southwest border.

• All aircraft departing the United States should be required by law to file flight plans, and all aircraft flying into this country should be required to clear Customs.

• At points of entry, Customs should use an effective search plan that does not pressure Customs officials to move people, cars and cargo across the border rapidly.