

Visiting Jamaica, Obama rejects legal pot

By Jordan Fabian

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Legalizing marijuana is not a “silver bullet” for ending the illicit drug trade, President Obama said Thursday in Jamaica. “I have to tell you, it’s not a silver bullet, because if you are legalizing marijuana, then how do you deal with other drugs and where do you draw the line?” Obama said during a youth forum with Caribbean leaders.

Obama said the U.S. would have to do more to reduce demand for marijuana and Caribbean and Latin American nations would have to step up their fight against violent drug cartels to curb their influence.

The president also warned big, multinational corporations, and not local businesses, could reap most of the rewards if marijuana became legal.

While Obama said he supports policies that would reduce sentences for non-violent drug offenders, Obama indicated he is not ready to endorse full-scale legalization of marijuana in the United States. “I do not foresee anytime soon Congress changing the law at a national basis,” Obama said.

Obama said he is taking a wait-and-see approach with the two states that have legalized the drug, Colorado and Washington. If they can create a successful program, it is “conceivable that will spur on a national debate, but that is going to be some time off,” Obama said.

Still, the president said the U.S.’s current drug laws are “counterproductive” because many young people without violent histories are left with criminal records that make them “unemployable.” “I am a very strong believer that the path we have taken in the United States on the war on drugs has been so heavy on emphasis on incarceration that it has been counterproductive,” he said.

Obama noted that the man who asked him the marijuana question at the youth town hall resembled dreadlocked Seattle Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch. “How did I anticipate this question?” Obama joked.

Obama announced \$68 million in new funding for job training and education for young people in the Caribbean and Central America at the town hall.