

Some drug offenders may be released early

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Sentencing Commission is considering an unprecedented early release for 19,500 federal inmates, the Los Angeles Times reported Monday. The plan, which would cut an average of at least two years from each sentence, addresses what is seen as an unfair disparity in federal cocaine laws that imposed harsher punishment on crack cocaine users and dealers than in powder cocaine cases, the Times reported. Nearly 80 percent of those sentenced annually on federal crack cocaine charges are African-American. The U.S. Justice Department warns the plan would increase crime as thousands of serious drug offenders are released across the country, the Times reported. However, the harsher treatment of crack offenders is "fundamentally unjust," said Reggie B. Walton, a federal judge in Washington, noting the commission several years ago retroactively reduced sentences for LSD offenders, who were mainly white, the Times reported.

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