



Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

OF

THE HONORABLE DICK THORNBURGH
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

THE ORGANIZED CRIME DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCES CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1988
U.S. GRANT HOTEL
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

NOTE: Because Mr. Thornburgh often speaks from notes, the speech as delivered may vary from the text. However, he stands behind this speech as printed.

It is a great pleasure for me to speak to this third conference of those of you engaged in the important effort to track down and disrupt major drug trafficking organizations in their subversive efforts to erode the health, welfare, values and traditions of this great nation.

It is evident to me that the coordinated undertaking embodied in the thirteen Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces is making significant progress in tackling the challenge of contributing to achieving President Reagan's goal of a drug-free America.

I have a somewhat unique perspective on all of this because, as most of you know, I served as head of the Criminal Division at the Justice Department during the Ford Administration from 1975 to 1977. I have a real appreciation of where we were, and how far we've come in the last thirteen years. And I'll tell you this: The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program is something that has brought us a very long way from where we were in 1975, and, as a matter of fact, a very long way from where we were just six short years ago when this program began in 1982.

That is when we finally moved away from the piecemeal approach to addressing our national drug problem and began the comprehensive, coordinated strategy so effectively illustrated by all of your efforts today.

I.

These efforts have effectively combined the unique talents and expertise of a wide variety of federal law enforcement agencies:

- * The physical and electronic surveillance capabilities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- * the undercover skills of the Drug Enforcement Administration
- * the tax and financial knowledge of the Internal Revenue Service
- * the skills of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in weapons investigation
- * the resources of the U.S. Customs Service in tracking international movements of people and funds
- * the intelligence gained from the U.S. Coast Guard's maritime activities

- * the Immigration and Naturalization Service expertise in tracking and deporting illegal aliens

- * the far flung authority of the Marshal's Service.

All coordinated by our United States Attorneys and integrated with cooperating state and local law enforcement agencies.

OCDETF is truly a verification of that old maxim: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts!

Many of you have been involved with these efforts since the beginning, and every day since then, you have given your all to meeting the objectives established by this, the best organized initiative, to date, to destroy the operations of organizations engaged in drug trafficking in this country. Objectives which remain as clear today as they were in 1982...Objectives to:

- * Work fully and effectively with state and local drug enforcement agencies, in order to

- * promote a coordinated law enforcement effort that would allow us to

- * target, investigate and prosecute individuals involved in drug trafficking organizations, and to
- * remove drug-generated assets and profits from those traffickers.

It was a tall order then and it is a tall order now, but look at what's been achieved.

Thanks to your work:

- * More than 2,300 separate investigations have been initiated,
- * close to 5,000 indictments and informations have been returned,
- * over 17,000 persons have been charged with drug-related criminal activities,
- * almost one billion dollars in cash and property has been seized -- 270 million of which has been shared with state and local agencies, with 385 million more in sharing requests pending,

- * nearly ninety-five thousand years of imprisonment have been ordered against OCDETF-targeted criminals,

- * and, thanks to your tireless labor, more than 10,000 drug traffickers -- 7,000 of whom were at the highest levels of control within their former organizations -- either have been, or are now, serving time in United States prisons.

In investigation after investigation and case after case OCDETF efforts are delivering the jabs, the body blows, and the knock-down punches that will one day lead us to the knock-out we're fighting for.

Just ask the Jamaican Posses.

I want to personally congratulate and thank all of you for your great success earlier this month in our latest effort against Jamaican organized crime activity -- some of the most vicious and deadly drug activity in the nation. The blow landed by "Operation Rum Punch Two" was one of the most sweeping attacks ever mounted against organized drug trade, and resulted in:

- * The arrest of 304 persons -- 70 percent of whom were residing in this country illegally -- in 21 cities across the nation,
- * the confiscation of 304 handguns, 7 long guns, and 4 machine guns,
- * and the seizure of more than 31 pounds of marijuana, nearly 135 ounces of cocaine, over 2,200 vials of crack, and almost a quarter-of-a-million dollars in cash.

Rum Punch Two was a textbook example of the effectiveness of OCDEF cooperative efforts and of the comprehensive, coordinated law enforcement philosophy it represents. And my hat is off to you.

I'd also like to mention the great success achieved just before that in "Operation C-Chase" -- the letter c, as in "c-note" -- the pocket change of the drug lords.

C-Chase was a major law-enforcement operation which uncovered major money-laundering channels between the Medellin Cartel and the world's seventh-largest bank, the Luxembourg-based

Bank of Credit and Commerce International -- uncovered those channels and stung the operators.

Thanks to Customs and all the other agencies involved, and to indispensable help from Customs' British and French counterparts, we nailed down indictments on the Bank itself and on several of its leading officers who were going out of their way to launder millions of dollars in drug profits.

II.

That is the record of accomplishment that has come as a result of our cooperative, coordinated efforts -- a record to which I proudly point when the nay-sayers and dooms-dayers sing the defeatist song of drug legalization.

And a record that I suggest be studied by anyone so irresponsible as to say that the fine men and women engaged in this effort, at a daily risk of their own lives, are waging a "phony" war on drugs.

There is nothing phony about it. In fact, the only phony element to our collective national battle against drugs and drug trafficking is the rhetoric from those who stand on the sidelines wringing their hands over the propriety of imposing effective

measures against drug trafficking -- such as the death penalty on murderous drug dealers and the notion that users of these substances be held fully accountable -- while pounding their chests about the need for tougher action.

Well, we finally got some of that action last weekend. The drug bill passed by the Congress and sent to the President, finally, sends a signal from Capitol Hill that we in the Department of Justice and our other working partners have been waiting for.

I won't say the bill is everything we wanted. I don't agree with the cumbersome and bureaucratic drug czar mechanism, for example. Nor do I fully agree with the "innocent owner" provisions, which, although I don't think they will ruin our abilities to pursue asset forfeiture, I do fear they may well hamper our effectiveness in that area. And note that the cap on forfeitures which can be handled administratively has been increased to 500,000 dollars.

But the good points of the bill far outweigh the bad and it is a very, very good starting point for renewing our efforts against illegal drugs and drug trafficking.

- * Imposition of the death penalty will be an option in the sentencing of criminals convicted of drug-related murder and
- * Expansion of mandatory minimum sentencing to include conspiracy and attempts to distribute drugs will make our prosecutions more effective.
- * Expanded options for imposing civil penalties will give us the latitude we need to crack down in every way possible against the drug-using community.
- * Legislative reversal of the McNally decision will restore a strong anti-corruption component to our crime-fighting arsenal.
- * Provisions of the bill will also improve our ability to control diversion of precursor and essential chemicals by setting up record-keeping requirements that will allow us to better track their distribution, and punish those who black market in these chemicals.
- * In the area of money laundering, the bill has given us an improved ability to get at the bank records we need to effectively prosecute money laundering crimes, and

to carry out federally financed sting operations on suspect banks.

And possibly most significant of all, aside from the specifics of the drug bill, is the fact that Congress, through a supplemental appropriation, will be funding our Justice Department programs at levels closely approaching those requested by the President. And you can rest assured that we'll continue to keep up the fight on the front.

The bill is a true milestone in, finally, getting Congress to work with us in fighting the on-going and ever-escalating battle against drugs.

That, of course, places upon us a greater burden than ever. We must increase still more our effectiveness in using the tools available to us, and we must see to it that we take full advantage of the opportunities that present themselves as a result of congressional action.

III.

We aren't perfect, and that's what this conference is all about. We are here to address the problems we face in targeting offenders and organizations. We're here to work to resolve

questions over agency jurisdiction and leadership authority. And we're here to look at setting higher standards of quality control for investigations and prosecutions.

None of that is window dressing and none of it is phony. This is a sincere effort to try to be better at the work we do. We will not run from our problems, or try to sweep them under the rug, any more than we would run from the threats that we face on the street.

The questionnaires you filled out are part of our efforts to tackle those problems head-on, and I assure you that we will. Whatever the differences that there may be in interpretation of authority, we will resolve them. And whatever the conflicts in leadership that might emerge, we will put them to rest.

The executive review board has looked at these and other issues recently, and has spoken with some very clear policy statements. I have requested, from each of them, a full report on the status of the implementation of these policy statements and I assure you, that I will do all that I can, in any way that I can, to help get them into place quickly and completely.

Your jobs are not easy, for you, or for your families. And I sincerely respect and admire the level of commitment

demonstrated in your work and in your success. And as this week will be a time for improvement and resolution of problems, I would also like it to be a time of reflection and renewal.

You've come a long way, under a very great burden, and while we can't say the end of our journey is in sight, we can look back and see the obstacles we've overcome. We can see, that through your success, we are giving Americans concrete evidence that the war against illegal drugs can be waged...and the honest hope that it can be won. From this we should all gain the confidence we need to look ahead to meeting new challenges and surmounting even greater obstacles.

Many of you were with me earlier this month, in South Carolina at the U.S. Attorneys' Conference, when I asked for reports to be prepared by each of our U.S. Attorneys on the "corporate structure" of the narcotics trafficking business in America, so that we can more effectively wage our battle, and so that we can fully educate the American public as to the size and breadth of these illegal and insidious business operations.

All United States Attorneys will be receiving a directive from the executive office, this week, to prepare reports for each of their districts that will tell us the hows and whys of drug

trafficking, and the ins and outs of various drug enterprises they must deal with.

As I said in Charleston, I want a "Who's Who" of the drug world, so we can compile a "Dun and Bradstreet" analysis of the business structure of drug trafficking in this country as never before -- to provide a basis for determining how best to effectively combat drug importation and distribution.

In effect, I'm asking for an analysis of sales, accounting, banking, finances, communications -- everything that can be identified out of past prosecutions and present investigations that makes up the complex and all too often invisible web of drug dealing in America.

I have given leave to our U.S. Attorneys to empanel the special investigative grand juries provided for under law in appropriate cases to aid in the preparation of more comprehensive long-range reports. And for everyone in this room who will be involved in this effort to compile this vital information, my instructions are: Work at it. Dig for it. Drag drug dealing out from under the rock where it lives and breeds. De-mystify it. And let's educate the American public once and for all about how this deadly game is being played.

Do that, find out, and furnish the information to me...And I promise you...No one will ever again accuse us of waging a "phony" war on drugs.

Thank you for your efforts, your commitment and your interest thus far in these vital undertakings. And may God bless you in your future endeavors.