

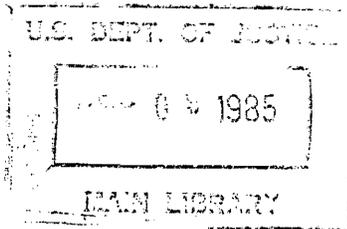


Department of Justice

ADDRESS

OF

THE HONORABLE EDWIN MEESE III
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES



BEFORE

UNITED NATIONS NARCOTICS OFFICIALS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1985
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

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

It is a great pleasure to be here in Vienna to address you today. You know, my travels as Attorney General--extensive though they are--rarely bring me outside of the borders of the United States. On this trip, however, my wife Ursula and I have been fortunate enough to spend several days first in Switzerland and now several more here in Austria. For those of you who take for granted the wonder of this city, let me assure you that both Ursula and I find it nothing less than breathtaking. I have a rather busy schedule of meetings, speeches, and the like, but we did manage to keep yesterday to ourselves, and last night we saw a performance at the opera house here in Vienna. No matter how busy one might be, it is impossible not to be struck by the manifest beauty and the cultural richness that mark this great city.

That being said, I should caution you that the problem about which I wish to speak today is a problem of such ugly seriousness as to belie the beauty that is Vienna. That problem is international drug trafficking. I know that I do not need to impress upon this audience the gravity of this blight on our international community.

I met earlier today with the heads of the three international narcotics organizations based here in Vienna: the United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, and the International Narcotics Control Board. The mere existence of these organizations speaks volumes about the progress that has been made in recent years toward dealing effectively with international narcotics trade and drug abuse. They represent a frank recognition of the fact that the war against drugs transcends national boundaries. No country today can realistically hope to combat domestic drug use without addressing the international component of the problem.

But just as no nation can rely solely on its own resources, neither can any country hope that international organizations alone can solve the problem of drug use within its borders. Indeed, only when each and every country with citizens involved in international drug trafficking, whether as a source of supply or as a market for narcotics--and today, this includes, to varying degrees, almost every country in the world--only when these countries resolve to address their common domestic problem can we realistically expect to benefit fully from the work of organizations such as the three based here in Vienna.

To recognize this fact, that national narcotics control efforts must precede and indeed, supercede, international efforts, is not to denigrate international organizations. Quite the contrary. For only when countries seriously confront their

own problems at home will they realize that the solution absolutely requires international cooperation. And only then, when we achieve a prudent mixture of national and international cooperation and coordination, can we hope not merely to arrest the growth of international drug trafficking, but to begin to roll back existing networks of traffickers, networks which pose a profound threat to people and countries throughout the world.

In short, then, my point is this: any country that makes serious efforts domestically to combat narcotics will necessarily recognize the need for international efforts. This has most certainly been the American experience, and this is why we have been so supportive of the organizations based here in Vienna. Let me briefly describe what that American experience has been.

Recent American efforts to combat domestic drug abuse have included both national and international measures. Typically, we divide these measures into two groups, those which target demand for drugs, and those which target the supply of illegal narcotics. That these two elements, supply and demand, are inextricably linked, is common knowledge to anyone even remotely familiar with the principles of a market economy. We firmly believe that by working from both ends, that is, by working to discourage demand and at the same time, to limit the supply as much as we can, we believe that the current situation can be considerably improved.

I will mention first the major components of our effort to limit supply of these narcotics to the would-be American user. Some of you may have heard of the marijuana eradication program, called Operation Delta-9, that we launched this summer. During the week of August 5, federal, state, and local law enforcement officers undertook an eradication drive that included all fifty of our states. Nationwide, officials located over 3,000 marijuana plots, eradicated some 405,000 plants, and arrested 225 people. By any standard, this coordinated effort, the largest of its kind ever undertaken in the United States, was an unqualified success.

For all of its impressive results and publicity, however, Delta-9 was only a part of our continuing eradication efforts. As our efforts at interdiction of foreign-produced narcotics grow more successful, there is a great incentive for our own citizens to enter the market as producers. Last year, 12% of the 14,000 tons of marijuana sold in the United States was grown on our own soil, and this percentage has been increasing each year. We are determined to use every available resource to see that this trend does not continue.

But clearly, our enforcement efforts in the United States require more than domestic eradication programs. With only 12% of the annual marijuana supply being produced domestically, and an even lower percentage with drugs such as cocaine and heroin, our supply-side strategy must include other measures.

Accordingly, another major aspect of this campaign to limit the supply of illegal drugs to American markets is the interdiction efforts that we currently pursue. Since so much of the supply for American drug markets comes from outside of our borders, interdiction has long been the centerpiece of our efforts to limit supply. As you all know, it is a frustrating task, one that requires substantial resources and dogged persistence.

Unfortunately, we can never hope to seize 100% of all the narcotics that people try to smuggle into our country. But there are ways to make more efficient use of the resources we now devote to these interdiction efforts. Most recently, our Congress amended the Posse Comitatus Act so that military services could be used for the first time to assist in the war against drug traffickers. Already, the Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Army have contributed either equipment or personnel, and the result has been more effective mobilization of our resources against the traffickers.

Along these same lines, I would mention the thirteen regional Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces that have been in operation since the summer of 1983. Staffed by approximately 1,200 agents and 270 Assistant U.S. Attorneys, these task forces have proven a most effective means of combatting the drug networks. By mid-November of this year--that is, in just over two years of operation--the task forces had

compiled an impressive record of over 1,900 indictments that named some 7,213 defendants. Already, these indictments have resulted in just under 3,000 convictions.

Now, the decision to involve oneself in drug trade is essentially the result of a cost-benefit analysis, however informal, on the part of the criminal. The key to effective measures against them is to increase the potential costs while lowering the likely benefits. It is toward the latter of these two goals, that is, removing any likely profits, that asset forfeiture contributes. Under the provisions of the 1984 Comprehensive Crime Control Act, we can now seize and confiscate any assets that were either used in the commission of a crime, or that represent the fruits of criminal activity. For those offenders who receive short sentences or fines, this is an especially aggravating provision, one that we therefore make sure to use whenever it is available.

The last unilateral, supply-side measure that I will mention is the great progress we have made toward recognizing money laundering as an offense punishable by law. Without access to banking institutions, drug traffickers will be hard pressed to convert their street cash, typically small denomination bills, into more manageable and more easily concealed mediums of exchange. We are currently working with our Congress to enact even tougher legislation than that now in existence.

In addition to these measures that the United States has undertaken on its own, we have pursued a wide range of bilateral programs to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. Since I came on as Attorney General in March of this year, I have met with the Presidents and/or top law enforcement officials of Mexico, Colombia, Canada, and several other of our Western Hemisphere neighbors. These meetings have been extremely productive, and we have made great strides toward increased cooperation in all areas of narcotics trade.

But without a doubt, the most significant bilateral achievement we have made is the establishment and continued success of the Italian-American Working Group on Organized Crime and Narcotics Trafficking. The Working Group held its third meeting recently in Washington, D.C. Already, we have concluded a number of agreements with the Italians on issues such as information sharing, joint investigations, and extradition. At these most recent meetings, we formed a subcommittee to determine how the Working Group might also include terrorism as part of its regular business.

I cannot overemphasize our enthusiasm over the success of this Working Group. Such bilateral measures are a most effective means to combat problems, such as drug trafficking, which so clearly require international cooperation. We will continue to work closely with the Italians, and we hope that we can use the same formula to establish similar groups with other countries.

These, then, are some of the ways we seek to limit the supply of illegal narcotics in our country. Through our efforts, national and international, unilateral and bilateral, we are making progress. Much remains to be done, but we are on the right track.

I mentioned earlier the interrelation of supply and demand. Let me further specify that relationship. We all know that, generally, demand will generate a supply. This is clearly the case with narcotics, and the American experience is evidence of this fact. So long as Americans, or any other people, continue to demand marijuana or cocaine or heroin, there will be people, whether in America or in a foreign country, willing to take the risks to supply the drugs. Demand, quite simply, will create a supply.

Perhaps President Reagan best summarized the approach of this Administration when he said: "No matter how effective we are against the pushers and drug smugglers, it still comes down to our young people making the right choice--the choice that keeps them free of drugs." And this Administration takes seriously its the duty to educate Americans about the dangers posed to individuals and to society as a whole by illegal narcotics. As Attorney General, I spend a good deal of my time speaking to parents groups, volunteer associations, high school

athletic coaches, and the like, trying to impress upon them the nature of our drug problem and the responsibility we all bear toward confronting this great challenge to modern society.

No American has been more tireless in her efforts to call attention to the perils of drug abuse than our First Lady, Nancy Reagan. She has mobilized and coordinated a wide range of public information programs, working closely with a host of our country's most visible celebrities to bring home to parents and children alike the horrible realities of drug abuse. And as most of you know, Mrs. Reagan was responsible for the historic First Ladies Conference held at the United Nations on October 21. Thirty First Ladies and Mrs. Perez de Cuellar attended the conference, and we should all be heartened by the spirit of mutual concern and resolve to act that the conference produced.

To re-educate a society about the threat posed by drug abuse is not an easy process; it will require a prolonged and persistent effort on the part of government leaders, celebrities, teachers, parents, indeed anyone in a position with visibility and authority. We are making that effort now, and we will continue to do so until drugs are no longer accepted as an inconvenience that we have to live with.

We will make that effort because drugs are much more than an inconvenience. It is my firm belief that drugs pose a major threat to the very existence of our free and civilized societies.

And in spite of all the programs I just described to you, I stress the point I made earlier--in the battle against drugs, no country can go it alone. We have made progress, but drug abuse persists. And no nation can long sustain the casualties we are suffering in terms of lives, health, productivity, wealth, crime, and yes, morality, without heightening our vulnerability to internal decay, and to aggression from without.

And so I speak to you today to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the United Nations organizations based here in Vienna. If we are to mobilize international cooperation against drug trafficking--cooperation that, as I mentioned earlier, I believe to be absolutely essential--if we are to effect this cooperation, these organizations must continue to play a leading role. The effectiveness of the work you do is limited only by the relatively small number of nations which now participate in your programs. Our absolute priority, therefore, must be to expand this list of countries to include those not currently involved, but that could so clearly benefit from the work you do.

But lest we overlook what has already been accomplished, I would like to commend those countries, especially Italy, Great Britain, Canada, and the Federal Republic of Germany, that continue to support the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse

Control. These countries, close friends all of the United States, provide a solid base from which we can hope to expand the Fund's current membership and scope of activities.

I would like to issue a formal invitation to those countries that thus far have decided not to support the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, to do so. The problem of drug abuse is by no means limited to the countries I just listed; I would urge any other nation which shares our concerns in this area to join us in this promising international undertaking.

I commend also the fine work of the International Narcotics Control Board, currently under the leadership of an American, Mrs. Betty Gough. The pioneering research and up-to-date reports that the Board puts together provide valuable assistance to officials from all of the member nations.

The third of the international narcotics organizations based here in Vienna is the United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs. The Division has sponsored law enforcement seminars in many different parts of the world; officials from our own Drug Enforcement Administration have frequently participated in these seminars, and I know that the work you do is greatly appreciated by those who benefit from your knowledge and expertise.

With the three organizations that I just mentioned, I feel we have in place the foundations from which we can hope to launch an international attack against drug traffickers, an attack of such magnitude as will be required to break up the complex networks of traffickers that plague our world. But these organizations will need the assistance of additional countries if they are to possess the resources necessary to implement fully the requisite measures.

In an effort to solicit such support and to stimulate international concern generally, U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has proposed that a world conference on drug abuse be held in 1987. The United States wholeheartedly supports the Secretary General's proposal, and we commend him on the leadership he has provided in this area. The problems of drug abuse and narcotics trafficking are international problems, and as such, it is extremely important that international organizations be involved in formulating a response. We believe that a world conference would stimulate greater participation in the organizations here in Vienna, and that inevitably would lead to greater international cooperation--on both the bilateral and multilateral levels--in the fight against narcotics worldwide.

We also support the effort currently underway to draft a new convention against drug trafficking. The United States has submitted some initial proposals to the Secretary General that we would like to be considered for inclusion in the new convention.

We were pleased to see that so many other countries also submitted proposals, and we hope that the resulting convention can effectively address the complex issue of drug trafficking by providing tools and mechanisms not presently offered in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Substances, its amended protocol of 1972, and the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. We look forward to working closely with the other nations to achieve a convention that is acceptable to all nations.

And lastly, I cannot conclude my remarks without mentioning the achievements of the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders that was held in Milan, Italy during late August and early September of this year. Most notably, the Congress adopted a draft resolution that deals with the very topic that I have discussed here. Entitled the "Struggle against illicit drug trafficking", this resolution shines as a reminder of the significant contribution that the United Nations can make. The United States is most impressed with the realistic, practical, and cooperative actions taken in the areas of international drug trafficking, international terrorism, international money laundering, and international organized crime in general. We fervently hope that the other member states will recognize these resolutions as the universally beneficial measures that we know they are.

Well, I hope that my remarks to you have not seemed too laborious. I want only to impress upon you the seriousness with which the United States takes the work that your three organizations do here in Vienna. Our own national experience has convinced us that the ultimate success of our efforts to combat drug abuse depends in large part upon international organizations such as your own.

Again, I commend you all on the fine work that you do. I encourage all other nations to join in the efforts we have undertaken here. I remain fully aware of the magnitude of the task we have assigned ourselves; the battle against drug abuse will not be easily won. But it is a battle we must fight, and with the help of the fine organizations that I address here today, it is a battle we stand a chance to win.

Thank you.