



Department of Justice

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REMARKS BY

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BEFORE THE

SEVENTH
INTERNATIONAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE

MIAMI, FLORIDA
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Good evening. I am honored to join you tonight, as you wrap up a long and intensive day. Throughout the past months, I've had the pleasure of personally meeting many of you to discuss the one subject that demands so much of us all. And that is controlling the worldwide drug epidemic.

But it is a particular pleasure for me to meet with all of the IDEC participants because I have a special place in my heart for IDEC. Last summer when I returned to Washington as Attorney General, I knew that I would find many changes at the Department of Justice since I had served there a decade earlier as part of the Ford Administration. In fact, I have often commented that the growth of our international activities, which largely corresponds with the growth of our drug problem, was the single most startling change I encountered.

I knew, therefore, that on returning to Washington I would find myself more involved in the drug arena. Little did I know, however, that my first press conference as Attorney General would be to announce the accomplishments of the simultaneous operations conducted under the IDEC umbrella. I quickly learned last August what IDEC stood for.

Tonight, as we all contend with what President Bush has aptly called the international scourge of drugs, I would like to

revisit the importance of international law enforcement cooperation.

We each have certain milestones, those times of the year when we reflect on our accomplishment, and make resolutions for the future. In our personal lives, as birthdays, anniversaries, and the new year roll around, we make personal commitments: to lose weight, to stop smoking, to start exercising, or whatever. As law enforcement officers, the annual IDEC meeting serves as a special milestone -- a time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, and a time to renew our resolve to forge ahead in the coming year.

It has been a year of tremendous change. A year of tremendous challenge. A year of tremendous accomplishment.

Consider what you have done over the past year, applying pressure on all of the choke points of the drug traffic: the drugs, the traffickers, and their assets.

It began with the IDEC Initiative, for which I again congratulate you: 1,200 arrests; 11 tons of cocaine seized; 13 cocaine laboratories destroyed. 244 tons of marijuana destroyed; 7 airstrips destroyed; 120-thousand coca plants destroyed; and almost \$4 million in cash seized.

As important as these arrests and seizures were, the simultaneous operations were far more important. You overcame obstacles such as language, boundaries, and national differences and showed the world that 30 nations could work together. As I said at the time, "We have seen what we believe is the future in cooperative law enforcement...."

The powerful signal that you all, working together, sent to the drug cartels has not been forgotten. You have spent much of today planning your next worldwide simultaneous assault, and I look forward to successfully coordinated enforcement efforts once again.

Over the past year, there have been innumerable successful operations that have targeted the drugs, the traffickers, and their assets, and I suspect that in the course of this conference, you have all discussed them in-depth. I would, however, like to take a moment to note the significance of just a few of them.

Throughout the history of IDEC, you have focused and brought international attention to the importance of controlling essential and precursor chemicals and in getting to labs where the cocaine is produced. This year we have seen the results of one country's endeavors in this area.

I congratulate the Colombian National Police and its Anti-Narcotics Unit for their highly successful Operation Primavera. In just the first wave of this assault into the heartland of the Medellin Cartel, these specially trained troops destroyed over 25 cocaine laboratories. Because of their efforts to seize chemicals, about 100 metric tons of cocaine were never produced.

Operation Primavera continues. Because of the dedication and diligence of the Colombian National Police, a strong blow has been struck at the source of much of the world's cocaine.

We have also seen the price and sacrifice of others in South America who are dedicated to stopping the cocaine pipeline. At no little cost, United States drug agents are working side-by-side with their counterparts in Bolivia and Peru as part of Operation Snowcap. While not without some controversy here in the United States, this long-range initiative represents a true law enforcement partnership.

I am convinced that for the foreseeable future, supply reduction strategies -- your law enforcement efforts -- will be an essential component of any global assault on narcotics and terrorism. Operation Snowcap, with its emphasis on disrupting the coca traffic in the processing and export stages, is an important part of the overall plan to disrupt drug availability.

While I have focused on drug seizures and destruction of laboratories, we all recognize that they are but one measure of success in the effort we are engaged in. Of far greater importance is the actual dismantling of the trafficking cartels if we want to make a lasting difference. For too many years, there have been numerous major investigations and operations where we had tremendous success, but it seemed that the kingpin always got away. Well, we are rewriting the common wisdom.

The Government of Mexico has shown the world that drug kingpins cannot operate with impunity. Earlier this month, agents from the new deputy attorney general's office and the "Iron Prosecutor," himself (Javier Coello Trejo) arrested Manuel Felix-Gallardo and six Mexican law enforcement agents who are believed to have been guarding him.

None of us are naive enough to think that the arrest of one kingpin will dismantle any cartel. But, the fact that we now have "untouchables" such as Felix-Gallardo and Carlos Lehder behind bars sends powerful signals worldwide. The cumulative effect of many more such arrests will make a difference.

The other pulse point of any drug trafficking organization is its assets. Money is the lifeblood of the cartels. There is no more effective way to deal with the business of drug trafficking than to take the profit out of it. Over the years,

there have been many outstanding drug-related money laundering investigations.

Most recently, last month we announced the conclusion of Operation Polar Cap, where we smashed a money-laundering operation that handled over one billion dollars in illicit drug profits that belonged to the Medellin Cartel. It took us two years to shut down an operation that spanned nine cities across the United States. But, the rewards have been tremendous: 127 persons indicted and the seizure of more than a half of ton of cocaine and \$45 million in cash, jewelry, and real estate.

This operation extended across not only across the United States, but into South America and England. We had notable assistance from Uruguay. Along with the major violators, bank branches in Panama and Colombia have been charged with conspiracy counts for their role. Clearly, one of the most effective weapons in our war on drugs is to take the profit out of illegal drug trafficking and to deprive those who are engaged in these far-flung operations around the world of the gains that they seek.

The prospect of seizing these assets is even more rewarding when the law enforcement agencies which participate in the seizing action get to reap the fruits of their labor. In the United States, our program of equitably sharing the forfeited

assets of drug traffickers has been an unqualified success in promoting inter-agency cooperation.

Yesterday, I was privileged to join President Bush in California where we presented \$10 million in checks to state and local departments that had participated with federal agents in cooperative drug investigations.

This money did not come from the taxpayer's wallet. These are resources that came straight from the traffickers' wallet, to be recycled for use by those who are fighting the drug war.

Our program of seizing, forfeiting, and sharing the assets of drug traffickers and money launderers is relatively new. Since the program got off the ground three years ago, we have shared over \$250 million with state and local law enforcement agencies in the United States, and we expect to share another \$100 million this year. Last year we also shared forfeited property such as cars, boat, and airplanes worth almost \$30 million.

I know that this highly successful program in the United States also has international applications. Nothing would give any of us greater pleasure than to see similar programs operating around the world. I know from my conversations with many of you

and the leaders of your nations that you are ready to join with us in the international assault against drug kingpin assets.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 clarified our authority to share assets with those our foreign counterparts. We are currently working out the mechanics of that process, and hope to have our system in place by the end of the summer.

However, in order for us to share fully in the spoils of victory when cooperation bears the fruit of forfeited assets, it will be incumbent upon your nations to work out agreements with us. If ever there was a case of "preaching to the choir," I suppose this is it. But, I wanted to take this opportunity to emphasize that once we have ironed out the details among all of the appropriate departments in the U.S. government, we won't be able to proceed without bilateral agreements.

I cannot mention international agreements without noting the significance of the United Nations Drug Convention adopted last December in Vienna to aid in mounting a concerted attack on drugs throughout the world. I was privileged to sign this document on behalf of the United States which I hope and expect will receive early ratification by the United States Senate.

This multilateral agreement, which was entered into by over 100 drug producing and drug consuming nations, provides a number

of new resources and tools to break the cycle of drug trafficking and money laundering. Simply, the convention has two main purposes: first, to establish an internationally recognized set of offenses relating to drug trafficking that are to be criminalized under the domestic law of the nations that are party to the convention; and second, to create a framework for international cooperation to enhance the prospects that traffickers and other who profit from trafficking are brought to justice.

This is a very important advance in the crucial worldwide fight against drug trafficking. The convention promises to bring far greater levels of cooperation among nations against the grave and growing twin problems of drug trafficking and money laundering.

We are at a point in our world's history where no one nation can deal with its drug problems alone or solely within its own borders. International cooperation must be our top priority today in drug law enforcement. The United Nations Drug Convention stands to benefit every nation that fully takes part.

We must capitalize upon this law enforcement convention. It can provide new tools for police, prosecutors, and the courts to carry out their responsibilities across international borders, while preserving the sovereignty of each nation. I would hope

that each of your countries make ratification of this landmark convention a priority in the months ahead.

The Vienna Convention was four years in the making, and so I recognize that the ratification process will also take time. That is why bilateral and multilateral agreements are still vitally important to law enforcement.

We will seek to strengthen the bonds of international cooperation through discussions such as the ones we initiated last week with my Mexican counterpart, Attorney General Enrique Alvarez del Castillo, to work on joint operations and to strengthen the training of Mexican agents, my meetings last month with the Presidents and lead law enforcement and military officers of Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, and the continuing efforts of the Italian American Working Group on Organized Crime that met in Washington earlier this month.

Yes, we still face enormous challenges. But, we cannot afford to retreat. I expect that next year at IDEC VIII we will look back on this year's accomplishments with pride. I hope that as we move forward we will make progress in the areas of asset forfeiture, eradication, extradition, and ratification of pending treaties, particularly the United Nations Drug Convention.

I would like to comment on one final matter. I have spoken this evening of the importance of continued international law enforcement cooperation. But, as I have told more than one surprised audience here in the United States, "If we want to lose the war on drugs, we should just leave it to law enforcement."

Of course, I do not mean to play down your efforts, and those of your men and women who put their lives on the line every day. What I do mean is that we must pay equal and considerable attention to the demand side of the drug equation-- to reducing the consumption of drugs in our country through programs of prevention, education, treatment, and rehabilitation. And, we must hold the drug user accountable for his or her share of the economic and social costs of drug dependency.

This is a job for us all. It involves, in the final analysis, a recognition of the threat to all of our nations of the continued toleration of the drug abuse plague. We all need to re-affirm the value of a drug-free lifestyle.

While many of you are responsible for the drug war that is being fought in the jungles of South America, or the urban jungles of our major cities, I believe that the only way we will ultimately win the drug war is on the battlefield of values. And here we are truly engaged in a struggle for the soul of the next generation.

As law enforcement officers, we have a job to do. But one of the things that we haven't been able to do as effectively as we should is to mobilize our citizenry to reduce the demand for drugs. As part of the IDEC process; you each can take pride knowing that this organization has been looking at law enforcement's role in demand reduction for some time. I can only encourage you in this effort. Law enforcement does have an important role in reducing demand. It is just as important as arrests and seizures.

Two weeks ago, Colombian President Virgilio Barco addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, DC. He very eloquently stated what is in the hearts and minds of all of us here. He said, "Drug production, consumption and traffic is not a problem of one nation, not even a group of nations; it is a universal scourge. If we don't develop effective and strong instruments for international cooperation to fight against all the different phases of the problem, there will be no final victory."

My friends, as members and observers of IDEC VII, you have brought us that much closer to fulfilling President Barco's call. I commend you. I thank you.

God Bless you all as you return to the field of battle.