



# Department of Justice

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"LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE 1990S:  
DAWN OF A NEW DECADE"

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL DICK THORNBURGH

TO

THE CALIFORNIA POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION  
1991 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1991  
ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

Thank you, Chief Burnett. Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here with the California chiefs as you begin this important meeting. We count many of you as longtime friends -- and I can assure you that, other than the President, law enforcement has no greater friend in Washington than those of us at the Department of Justice.

If you are like me, you are finding it difficult, indeed, to concentrate on the tasks at hand. Our attention today is riveted, through television and radio, on the action in the Persian Gulf, where countless lives hang in the balance on the sands of a distant desert. Today's events in the Middle East are of truly historic proportion -- a classic war, with all that it implies.

I would suggest to you, however, that our efforts to save and repair lives devastated by drugs and violent crime, day in and day out -- while perhaps no longer on the front page -- remain of great significance. This is a war of different proportion, to be sure -- certainly, a different kind of war. But, nonetheless, it is a war in which the troops under our commands go forth and do battle on a daily basis.

So while we are properly focused on events in the Middle East, we must, as the President has asked us to, go about the very important business at hand, fighting an important crime war here in our country, here on our streets.

Chief Molloy's invitation to speak with you was most propitious. Your conference coincides with the release of the third edition of the President's National Drug Control Strategy and the transmission of next year's budget to Congress. So, you are among the first audience to get a preview as to what is on the horizon for law enforcement.

I was also struck by the theme you have chosen for your conference, "Dawn of a New Decade." You may not be aware of this, but with the advent of 1991, we have entered the United Nations' Decade Against Drug Abuse. Some of you may know the enthusiasm I have developed for the United Nations' efforts to bring about world unity in the drug control area through implementation of U.N. Drug Law Enforcement Convention. I was privileged to represent the United States at the Convention's signing over two years ago in Vienna, and I was proud to represent the United States at the United Nations in New York when this important Convention became effective this past November.

This is truly an international law enforcement convention -- dedicated to enhancing cooperation among law enforcement agencies worldwide and to providing the tools to help all of us to do our job better. This historic document has many provisions, including specific requirements to more effectively extradite

criminals, exchange evidence, control traffic in drug chemicals, and pursue money laundering as a crime.

Beyond international cooperation, the alliance of federal, state, and local law enforcement is an equally essential weapon in our war against drugs and violence. From the law enforcement perspective alone there are some things that only the federal government can do: such as working across state lines and in other countries with our foreign counterparts, creating national and international intelligence networks, dismantling the uppermost echelons of major criminal drug trafficking enterprises, and interdicting drugs and criminals at our nation's borders. In short, it is our responsibility to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy the drug trafficking organizations, by incapacitating their leadership, and by seizing and forfeiting the immense profits and proceeds derived from their illegal activities.

As we collectively direct our enforcement efforts further up the trafficking chain away from the purchaser to the retail sellers, to the mid-level distributors, and to the wholesalers, there is a need for greater cooperation among the federal, state, and local branches of government. Many of these efforts, as you know, result from informal arrangements with two or more departments working together against a common target. Others are the result of longstanding, established interagency cooperation.

One of the most successful of these initiatives has been and continues to be the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces. The President's Drug Control Strategy recognizes these task forces for what they are -- a flagship effort, a model of effective, intergovernmental cooperation dedicated to dismantling organized drug networks at the highest possible level. These task forces capitalize on the skills of nine federal agencies, including DEA, the FBI, and the IRS, and depend on the significant support we receive from state and local agencies.

In the President's budget, I can tell you that we are asking the Congress for significant overall resource enhancements -- an 11 percent increase for the national drug control budget alone. In the OCDETF program, we want to increase drug enforcement funding by 19 percent, and funding for prosecutions by almost 25 percent. In short, next year we intend to put over \$400 million in all into this task force initiative.

The DEA State and Local Task Force program will also expand, as will our efforts under the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program. The HIDTA program is particularly significant for the California police chiefs because two of these areas touch you directly: Los Angeles and the Southwest border. In fact, federal spending among the five HIDTHAs has doubled from its first year, up to \$50 million now. The Office of National Drug Control Policy will soon allocate the additional \$32 million that

Congress earmarked directly for state and local law enforcement agencies.

We are also continuing to fund the drug war from my favorite source: the drug dealers themselves! Last week, I announced that in the last six years the Justice Department's Asset Forfeiture Fund has collected more than \$1.5 billion. What poetic justice when we can turn a drug dealer's profits into law enforcement weapons! Since 1985 when we started this effort, more than one-half billion dollars has been shared with state and local law enforcement agencies. As we have told the drug profiteers, "You make it ... we'll take it."

And I might add that most of the sharing activity has occurred here in California. Over one-third of all equitable sharing disbursements nationwide have taken place in this state. That has amounted to well over \$155 million over the past five years, and over \$50 million in last year alone. This reward is, however, nothing more than you and your departments deserve. The role played by police officers, sheriffs, and highway patrol officers in our war on drugs cannot be understated. Your contribution to the overall effort merits this recognition.

That's why it gives me particular pleasure to announce this afternoon that 13 California law enforcement agencies will soon once again reap this bounty as the Justice Department will share

almost \$5 million as a result of your participation in a number of cases. Some of these seizures resulted from traffic stops, consent searches, and comments such as, "Gee, officer I had no idea that I had \$530,000 in cash in my trunk!" Other traffickers had been the subjects of OCDETF investigations. Others were stopped at the airport. And one forfeiture occurred after law enforcement officers discovered almost \$600,000 buried under a chicken coop!

In addition to benefiting directly, you benefit indirectly by other Assets Forfeiture Fund expenditures. Did you know that in its five years, nearly half a billion dollars of the Fund's assets have gone to prison construction? What a fitting, lasting "memorial" to those who provided the funds initially!

While I am on the subject of moving money from the federal coffers, you may be interested to know that the first of the 1991 formula grants to state criminal justice agencies are now being awarded. If you haven't already heard, California now has its share of the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Enforcement Assistance Program, named in honor of the young New York police officer who was murdered while guarding a witness in a drug case. California will receive over \$43 million this year, a 9 percent increase over last year. Almost 65 percent of these funds will be passed through by the state to local law enforcement agencies. And California is doubling the baseline award to each county.

This program is important because within the general policy guidelines established by the President's drug strategy, you have the flexibility at the state and local level to apply these funds to solve your unique problems. For example, it allows more efforts directed towards local activities such as street sweeps and innovative neighborhood policing programs. These funds will also support your statewide task force, Operation Crackdown, to continue the important job of targeting Colombian drug cartels and street gangs involved with cocaine and money laundering.

This grant program also supports DARE, a program that goes to the heart of law enforcement's role in reducing the demand for drugs. I think it worth a minute to acknowledge this extraordinary accomplishment of Chief Daryl Gates. With his leadership, what began in Los Angeles just a few years ago is now a national endeavor in over 100 communities with seven regional training centers sponsored by the Justice Department.

DARE is important because it teaches our young people about the many kinds of problems that drug cause, as well as that very important skill: how to "say no." But I believe that DARE's real importance is more intangible. It stems from having law enforcement officers in the classroom. Without saying a word on the subject, when these officers stand in front of students they are providing those positive role models that we hear so much

about. This presence in the schools brings with it a renewed respect for police officers and the values you represent. A priceless lesson, indeed!

I have often said that the war on drugs will be finally won only on the battlefield of values, and DARE is helping us effect that change. As the President noted when he released the third National Drug Control Strategy last week, the signs of progress are unmistakable. Survey after survey shows that not only are our citizens overall, but our young people in particular, taking fewer drugs, they are now telling us that they perceive drugs to be harmful and that they disapprove of drugs.

What a remarkable shift in attitude in only a few years! In fact, the most impressive statistic to emerge from the recent data is that more than one-half of the graduating high school class of 1990 reported getting out of the 12th grade never having even tried illegal drugs. Not even once! Consider that only a decade ago, two out of every three had tried drugs.

So, yes, our supply reduction and demand reduction efforts are paying off. Your hard work is paying off. But we must not become complacent. And we must not allow the American people to become complacent. Because although the news is much better, levels of drug use and its attendant violence are still unacceptably high. We have a long road in front of us and the

President's drug strategy is our map. It is now up to all of us to continue working together, arresting, prosecuting, and punishing those who violate our laws.

While the Congress has given us some of the very important tools that we need, there is still some unfinished business. The Crime Control Act of 1990 did, in fact, include several provisions that will be most helpful in the fight against drug trafficking and violent crime. These include: mandatory detention pending sentence or appeal for persons convicted of felony crimes of violence or serious drug offenses, enhanced penalties for methamphetamine distribution, improvements to the asset forfeiture procedure, and authorization for "sting" operations targeted at international money launderers.

During the last session of Congress, you and I, police and prosecutors together, submitted other essential proposals that were approved separately in each house of the Congress. But at the 11th hour, these critical measures to deal with the violent crime problem were stripped from the crime bill by the conference committee. That legislation contained a death penalty provision for the most heinous federal crimes, including mail bombing and terrorist murder, a comprehensive reform of a habeas corpus system that has virtually nullified state death penalty laws through repetitive hearings and endless delays, and a "good faith" exception to the exclusionary rule.

As the President noted in his State of the Union address, "We need tough crime control legislation, and we need it now." We need it to protect what I have often called the first civil right of every American: the right to be free from fear in our homes, on our streets, and in our communities. We will be calling upon the nation's law enforcement community to join us once again in demanding that the Congress heed the will of the people and enact the legislation first contained in the President's 1990 Violent Crime Initiative.

Addressing violent crime is also at the top of my agenda. That is why we are convening a special law enforcement summit next month, inviting more than 500 members of the judiciary, police officers, prosecutors, and representatives of community organizations, including several of you who are here today, for two days of exchange and discussion in early March. Just as you are here for the next several days to explore policing in California on the "Dawn of a New Decade," so will we be doing the same on a national level next month.

The plenary sessions and panel discussions will highlight successful strategies for enhancing public safety, meeting our responsibilities to innocent victims of crime, and re-asserting the traditional values that are the foundation for a drug-free and law abiding society.

It will be a jam-packed two days, with the best in the business sharing what they know. Your Attorney General, Dan Lungren, as well as several of the chiefs here, are among our speakers. I hope we can all learn about some of the as-yet-unheralded innovations to prevent crime, to help our children and families, and to enhance cooperation among federal, state, and local levels of government. There will be a special emphasis on the violent offender and on punishment strategies. And that is just a sampling of what is to come.

For the foreseeable future, each of us must continue to be a part of the war on drugs and violent crime that is being waged daily in our schools and churches, in our neighborhoods and workplaces, and throughout our communities. As our thoughts and prayers are with the brave young Americans engaged in combat on a distant battlefield, I urge you to redouble your efforts on these other front lines, here at home.

May God be with each of you, with the men and women of our Armed Forces, and with our Nation's leaders in the difficult days ahead.