



Department of Justice

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REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE DICK THORNBURGH
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

THE PITTSBURGH WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

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I want to speak to you today about the global reach of our war against drugs, an effort that has attracted an increasing amount of rightful attention of late, at home and abroad.

My appointment as Attorney General of the United States, as many of you know, represents a return appearance for me in the Justice Department: I served as head of the Criminal Division a decade ago in the Ford Administration. And if I had to identify the biggest single change in the Department in the years since I last served there, I would have to say it was the growth of our international involvement -- a growth probably best illustrated by our effort to cope with the global problem of drug abuse.

Since assuming office, I have visited with nearly two dozen of my law enforcement counterparts around the world to ensure our continued cooperation on a variety of matters. At each of these meetings, all have agreed on the particular need for greater international cooperation in the war on drugs, a war that deserves all of our support.

The modern plague of drugs preys upon young people, devastates families and communities and threatens the well-being of all nations, just as did the plagues of disease in centuries past. Drug abuse disables millions of people and threatens to enslave millions more. It is the great equalizer, victimizing rich and poor alike, male and female, making no distinction on the basis of race, language, culture, or even age.

The toll that drugs exact on our societies extends far beyond the individual victim. In a sense, all of us become victims, for our health and safety is at stake when others use drugs. We become victims of the crimes that addicts commit to sustain their habits. Community values crumble. Institutions weaken, and our governments must divert resources and attention to those problems of crime and corruption that invariably accompany drug production, trafficking and abuse.

In many of the countries I have visited, narcoterrorism flourishes as terrorists and traffickers enter conspiracies of convenience. Drug production and trafficking also have stunted social and economic development, corrupting even whole societies through the tawdry promises of wealth through drugs, and retarding efforts to maximize the productivity and efficiency of people in the workplace.

Drug traffickers have vast international networks, profits and arms at their disposal. They have no need to advertise their products, and they are able to gain access to villages, cities, schoolyards, workplaces, and, as we have recently learned to our dismay, athletic locker rooms.

As drugs make their way from point of origin to point of sale, they pump billions of dollars into the pockets of the traffickers and the dealers, who live at the heights of the high life as a result of the misery and devastation they visit upon others.

There is no more international a business today than the drug cartels -- a business where the raw materials are grown in one country, processed into illegal drugs in another, and shipped through several countries for sale in yet others.

Profits from these sales are in turn recycled through laundered investments in a multitude of disguised transactions crossing many borders, often using legitimate international financial institutions.

The cost of drug abuse is bad enough in the United States where approximately 23 million Americans, or almost one in every ten of our citizens, used an illicit drug within the past month; where approximately 70 percent of those arrested for other than drug charges tested positive for illegal drugs at the time of their arrest; and where nearly \$100 billion a year is spent to combat illegal drug problems.

But when we deal with drugs on the international level, we see up close the even greater horrors that the drug trade can cause. During my visit to Colombia last month, for example, I learned of drug traffickers who ambushed the security chief of a major Colombian newspaper last year, killing him in front of his wife, and shooting his ten-month-old daughter as well. The late Colombian Attorney General, Carlos Mauro Hoyos, was kidnapped and found fatally shot in the head. Enrique Parejo, Colombia's ambassador to Hungary, was tracked down and shot at in Budapest by Colombian drug traffickers for having opposed them while he was Justice Minister.

Altogether, drug traffickers have killed twelve supreme court justices, 25 other judges and scores of other government officials, effectively neutralizing law enforcement efforts in this beleaguered country.

If there is anything that could be called a bright side to the world-wide drug problem, it is that because the problem cuts across differences that are otherwise very great, it gives nations grounds for cooperation even while their relations in other areas may be difficult.

This was evident in Vienna last December when over 100 nations participated in drafting a United Nations Convention designed to mount a concerted attack on drugs throughout the world.

I was privileged to sign this document on behalf of the United States and to evidence our leadership in this effort which I hope and expect will receive early ratification by the United States Senate.

The new multi-lateral agreement, entered into by drug-producing as well as the drug-using nations, provides a number of new resources aimed at breaking the cycle of drug trafficking and money-laundering that sustains the drug cartels. Its adoption can dramatically increase our internationally cooperative efforts against drug dealers.

Let me take a moment to outline the terms of this historic agreement.

First, it is important to note that it is a law enforcement convention, providing new tools for police, prosecutors and judges from the signatory nations more effectively to carry out their responsibilities across international borders, while preserving each nation's sovereignty.

The veil of bank secrecy, for example, as an impediment to gathering evidence against traffickers and as a method of hiding illicit profits, will be lifted. Governments are also given the tools to seize illicit drug profits and use them, as we do in the United States, to enhance our law enforcement efforts.

Second, all the nations signing the Convention have agreed to exchange evidence of criminal conduct and to extradite accused traffickers so that safe havens are no longer so readily available.

The pact, in effect, tells the cartels that they are not welcome within any of our borders.

Third, the Convention provides for the supervision of the manufacturing and sale of essential and precursor chemicals for the production of illegal drugs, in terms similar to recently-enacted U.S. legislation.

Fourth, commercial carriers are brought into the drug war through requirements that they make certain that commercial consignments are free from drugs. Law enforcement officials are given the authority to board, search and, if necessary, seize vessels used in the drug business.

Finally, the Convention reaffirms the need for aggressive efforts in crop eradication and demand reduction to complement its law enforcement initiatives.

While the Convention itself does not alter the laws of any nation, it commits the signers to the enactment of new legislation where necessary and to increased cooperation among law enforcement officials.

The Convention represents the work over the past four years of hundreds of officials meeting under the auspices of the United Nations, an effort in which our Justice and State Departments played a vital role. Most of the signatory nations are expected to implement the work of the Vienna conference in the coming months.

The U.N. will continue to play an important role in monitoring the implementation through the already established International Narcotic Control Board. Policy oversight will be provided by the U.N.'s Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Full implementation of this Convention would give our children, and their children, the gift of a world cleansed of what President Bush properly identifies as "the scourge of drug abuse," a world where governments carry out their responsibilities free of the corrupt influence of drug profiteers, a world where the vicious criminals now in control of transnational drug cartels are behind bars, their networks in ruins, and their seized illicit profits plowed back into more effective law enforcement.

This will not happen overnight and will not happen without a lot of hard work. This Convention, however, makes it far more likely that the nations of the world will be working together toward this end.

With these tools, multi-national enforcement efforts such as those which we at the Department of Justice have increasingly emphasized can be carried out with greater frequency. Among the more recent successes in this regard are:

- * The activities of the International Drug Enforcement Conference, or IDEC, a consortium of Western Hemisphere law enforcement agencies which last year carried out its first joint operations resulting in over 1200 arrests and the seizure of massive amounts of cash and illegal drugs.

- * Operation Polar Cap, which last month smashed a money-laundering operation which had handled over a billion dollars in illicit profits of the Medellin drug cartel over a two year period.

- * The arrest last fall of over 300 persons affiliated with the crack cocaine gangs known as the Jamaican Posses, urban terrorists who staked out a large piece of the nation's drug and firearms trafficking in our inner cities.

- * Operation Iron Tower, a joint undercover operation between the FBI and Italian authorities which resulted in simultaneous arrests of over 200 heroin and cocaine traffickers in eight U.S. and Italian cities last December.

Just a week ago, an Italian-American working group met in Washington to design further cooperative efforts against drug trafficking and later this month an IDEC planning conference will be convened to plan new operations in this hemisphere, strengthened by my personal visits last month to the presidents and principal law enforcement officials of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru, the major cocaine-producing nations in the world.

Through the U.N. Drug convention, joint operations such as those I outlined, Mutual Assistance Treaties, and other means, our Department of Justice will soon be reaching more and more overseas defendants in drug cases.

The IDEC crackdown, Operation Polar Cap, the Jamaican Posses arrests and Operation Iron Tower will not be isolated triumphs. They will be merely what the drug lords and their lackeys can expect from an outraged United States and our working partners abroad.

One final matter deserves note. I have spoken today of the need for international law enforcement efforts to attack the drug problem and that is important. But as I told a somewhat surprised audience last week, "If we want to lose the war on drugs, we should just leave it to law enforcement."

By that I did not mean to play down the efforts of those who put their lives on the line each day to deal with the traffickers and terrorists involved in the supply side of the drug trade.

What I did mean was that we must pay equattention to the demand side -- to reducing the consumption of drugs through programs of prevention, education, rehabilitation and treatment and holding the drug user accountable for his or her share of the economic and social costs of drug dependency.

And this is a job for all of us. It involves, in the final analysis, a recognition of the threat to our nation of continued tolerance of the plague of drug abuse and a re-affirmation of the value of a drug-free lifestyle as compared with the despair and ruin of a drug-dependent lifestyle.

The only way we will win the drug war, conclusively, is on the battlefield of values. And here we are truly engaged in a struggle for the soul of the next generation.

We'll win the war on drugs when changes in values force drugs out of fashion.

When the yuppie on the move no longer thinks it's hip to score from the corner supplier on his lunch hour.

When drug-using rock stars and athletes cease being popular idols.

When, in the inner-city school, the dealer with his gold chains and flashy car becomes an outcast rather than a role model for impressionable kids.

This struggle will not be decided in the courtroom, but in the classroom, in the community, in our houses of worship, and in the family.

Because it's a struggle not over laws, but over values, The value of self-respect and self-reliance and, above all, the integrity of the individual mind and spirit, functioning as God designed them to function.

So in a sense, I have taken you full circle. Beginning with an overview of the international nature of the drug problem and the international efforts being mounted to fight it, I have ended right here, back at home, reminding you that here is where the real solution begins, with an effort to reduce the demand for drugs by changing attitudes, values and responses to the allure of drugs.

Our goal is straightforward. It is an America -- and a world -- where "pot" once again means a useful cooking utensil, where "crack" is the sound of a baseball hitting a "bat," where "grass" is something to mow, not to smoke, and where "heroin(e)" means a Helen Keller, a Christa McAuliffe, or a Sandra Day O'Conner.

This is a goal toward which we all can, and should, persevere.

Thank you.