



# Department of Justice

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"THE WAR ON DRUGS: A VIEW TO VIRGINIA'S SUMMIT"

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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AT THE  
VIRGINIA SUMMIT ON DRUGS BANQUET

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA  
MONDAY, APRIL 16, 1990

I am honored to join you this evening at this Virginia Summit on Drugs, especially to salute those of you in law enforcement for the brave part you are playing in the war on drugs. You have faced rough duty out there on the streets, I am well aware, and have fought your way up some steep slopes -- to reach this summit. I want to pay you sincere tribute, as we look together at the real nature of those crimes that go hand-in-hand with drugs -- the dirty hand which clasps the bloody hand, together forming the death grip of the drug abuser and the drug trafficker.

Increasingly, these days we are hearing naive talk about drug-abuse as "a victimless crime." We hear pundits, professors, and even judges, learnedly proposing to legalize drugs. What does this talk constitute but just the opposite of street smarts? Call it, I say, street ignorance. For it ignores the lessons of the street and indicates we still have a job to do to make people recognize the true risks that are associated with drugs.

Drugs are not a victimless crime. Far from it. Consider the risks to the institutions which undergird our society and values: families, schools, businesses, even our system of democracy itself. Not to mention the enormous costs that must be borne -- eventually -- by every citizen and taxpayer.

In the next fiscal year, the federal government will spend over \$10.6 billion dollars nationwide in support of our National

Drug Control Strategy. About one fourth of that will go to directly support state and local anti-drug activities. Virginia will receive over \$9.2 million in grants from our Department of Justice alone, over three times the \$2.7 million you received in 1989. But even with such funding, how can you ever "offset" what drugs have already done to the families of substance abusers? How can you ever "recover" the terrible cost to the children of drug addicts -- especially those babies who enter into the world thrashing, trying to shake the shackles of a crack addiction they were born with?

Drugs a victimless crime? Think about the level of violence and homicide that attends the current crime wave, and then recall that well over half of those arrested for non-drug felonies test positive for drugs. With every drug purchase, whether its made on some dark urban street corner or behind a rustic rural barn, that transaction represents that last stage in a criminal business enterprise that, in terms of production, marketing, and distribution, rivals the most efficient of legitimate, multi-national consumer businesses. That one drug purchase -- and hundreds of thousands like it -- support a network of multinational criminal conglomerates, who not only contribute to our domestic strife and the dissolution of our communities, but who also threaten the very democracies of our South American allies.

A victimless crime? The National Transportation Safety Board reported earlier this year that 33 percent of the truck drivers killed last year were impaired by drugs or alcohol, exposing countless other drug-free drivers to the risk of accident, injury, or death.

Those are only some of the risks, and each of you here knows of many others.

But what of responsibility? Who must face up to the daunting challenge of facing down drug abusers and drug traffickers. Everyone turns first, of course, to Uncle Sam. One of the most famous of fables is, "I'm from the federal government and I'm here to help." We are here to help, but it's no accident that President Bush's strategy is called a National Drug Control Strategy, not a federal one.

Yes, your federal government does have an important role to play in the war on drugs. Because, clearly, from just 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, and dismantling the upper-most echelons of major criminal drug trafficking enterprises.

In the next few moments I'd like to highlight for you some of the major areas where we will be focusing the federal effort. It will quickly become apparent that there is a role here for everyone, and I'm not speaking just about government and its institutions. We must count on the unqualified support of many disciplines throughout American society: business, education, health care, and perhaps, most important, parents and individual citizens. We must all do our part. And we must work together, as true partners, if we're going to make a difference.

From a law enforcement perspective, our responsibility is to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy drug trafficking enterprises. This ambitious agenda reaches across the full spectrum of drug activity. We intend to disrupt the drug marketplace by displacing sellers and users alike. We intend to dismantle drug trafficking organizations by incapacitating their leadership.

And, most important, we intend to destroy the very infrastructure of these criminal conglomerates by seizing and forfeiting the immense profits and proceeds derived from their illegal activities. Recently, for example, we seized over \$90 million dollars of the drug assets of just one of the major Colombian kingpins, stashed in four different countries. We're also going after the illegal income of General Noriega and other narco-traffickers.

As the President's National Drug Control Strategy emphasizes, there is a progression in our partnership efforts to fight the drug problem. Realistically, most of the enforcement activity directed toward the street drug user will come from the local and municipal levels of law enforcement.

But 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 increasingly more cooperation among the federal, state, and local branches of government. Many of these efforts result from informal arrangements with two or more police departments working together against a common target. But still other enforcement endeavors 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 Strategy recognizes these task forces for what they are -- a model of effective, intergovernmental cooperation dedicated to dismantling organized drug networks at the highest possible level. This program will realize major resource enhancements next year -- increases that will provide for more federal investigators and prosecutors, as well as support staff, across the country.

These Task Forces capitalize on the skills of nine separate federal agencies, including the DEA, FBI, and IRS, as well as significant support from state and local agencies.

In fact, I want to applaud one major success you've recently scored here in Virginia, through the Task Force under U.S. Attorney Henry E. Hudson. That is the OCDEFT undercover operation that dismantled the Tabar Organization. Amin J. "Amir" Tabar once worked for the Iranian embassy, but abruptly changed careers in 1987, and spent the next two years drug-trafficking in the DC/Northern Virginia/Maryland market. He will now spend the next twenty years in prison without prospect of parole.

Amir Tabar was convicted of trafficking in drugs from two continents. He orchestrated the smuggling of heroin and opium from Iran and handled shipments of cocaine from Mexico. His organization, with some fifty employees, did at least \$5 million worth of drug-dealing through three Virginia used car dealerships. But no more.

Earlier I mentioned that one of our goals is to destroy the very financial infrastructure of these criminal drug enterprises. Experience has taught us that as important as it is to convict and imprison the drug kingpins, they are often replaceable. But, when we seize and forfeit their cash, their cars, their boats,

their planes, their houses -- and even their satellite dishes -- these crime syndicates can't go on.

Nationwide, our forfeitures exceeded a half billion dollars last year -- \$160 million of which was turned back to cooperating state and local agencies.

Just as was done in the Tabar Case. Not only did we see a significant sentence imposed, but I'm pleased to report that we were able to seize and forfeit over one million dollars in assets -- a quarter of a million in cash, real estate and sixteen cars.

I am also pleased to report that the three Arlington, Virginia police officers who took part in this undercover operation earned their department an equitable share in the Tabar forfeiture -- \$74,000. Appropriately, the moneys have been used to purchase Glock 9-millimeter pistols for all Arlington police officers, upgrading their protective firepower to help match the deadly weaponry of the drug-dealers.

We are forging other new partnerships as well. In Virginia you are fortunate to have two excellent Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees, directed by two fine LECC Coordinators in our U.S. Attorneys' offices: Sharon "Sam" Dibbley in the Eastern District, and Betty Fitzgerald in the Western District.



Out of Alexandria, for example, Sam Dibbley has been staffing conferences for state and local law enforcement officials -- on search and seizure warrants, drug-demand reduction, and asset forfeiture -- thus recycling the experience gained back into more effective law enforcement.

The LECCs have also embarked on special partnership programs within the community. In two progressive outreach efforts to target the profits and proceeds of drug trafficking, the U.S. Attorney's Offices and federal agents are meeting with representatives of the banking and financial communities to provide them with an overview of money laundering and their role and responsibilities in curbing this criminal activity.

I hope that by mentioning just these few ways in which we are trying to attack the drug problem within our communities, you'll get some ideas of how you can work through existing channels or identify which new channels need forging.

I'd like to turn from American states like Virginia for a moment and focus on another America -- Latin America -- as it relates to our international endeavors. As you know, President Bush met recently with the Presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru to arrive at ways in which cooperation can be enhanced to strengthen comprehensive assaults against the production,

trafficking, and consumption of illegal drugs. The United States is already committed to providing military surveillance, law enforcement, and economic assistance to these Andean nations. And, although our South American neighbors have demonstrated tremendous will, resolve alone is insufficient. They need our help -- our resources as well as our moral support.

That is why I am leaving on Wednesday to chair our delegation to the special meeting of law enforcement leaders from the Organization of American States -- the top police and prosecutors from 27 Western Hemisphere nations. We will convene for three days in Ixtapa, Mexico, to map out specific ways in which we can work together to truly make the whole of our hemispheric effort more than the just sum of its parts.

At the top of our list, I will be urging all member nations of the OAS to ratify the United Nations Drug Enforcement Convention. We in the United States were one of the first nations to join this important undertaking to enhance law enforcement efforts worldwide. Over 100 nations drafted this new drug fighting treaty, which I was privileged to sign on our behalf in late 1988, in Vienna.

When fully implemented, this compact will establish a truly international network of cooperation unparalleled in law

enforcement history. We can look forward to the day when bank secrecy laws no longer lead to dead ends. We can look forward to the day when, aided by mutual legal assistance treaties and obligations to extradite international drug felons, we can promise these nefarious crooks that there will be no safe havens. And we can look forward to the day when asset-forfeiture laws will have a worldwide reach into the rich coffers and deep pockets of the drug lords.

Events of the past year in our hemisphere can give us many reasons for hope. The level of enforcement activity in Colombia is unprecedented. Not only has President Virgilio Barco stood firm in the face of the assaults of the narco-trafficanes; he also showed his courage and mettle in extraditing by decree some 15 of their nationals to the United States to stand trial for drug trafficking violations.

No less exciting has been the end to the tyranny in Panama, whose self-declared ruler now awaits trial in Florida for drug trafficking. And the conviction and sentencing in Mexico of a number of persons, including Raphael Caro Quintero and Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, who were responsible for the murder of DEA Special Agent Kiki Camarena.

These tales are every bit as exciting as Tom Clancy's Clear and Present Danger, but they're a true testament to that special courage of narcotics officers everywhere in the world, beginning here at home.

Let there be no mistake. We all yearn for what President Bush has described as a kinder and gentler America. But we also recognize that, in order to achieve a kinder and gentler nation for all Americans, we're going to have to get rougher and tougher with some Americans -- those involved in drug trafficking and the violence it inevitably spawns. Those who choose to violate our laws must, and will, be held responsible, and that's a job for all of us in law enforcement.

But this war won't be won by you committed men and women who police our streets and communities -- alone. And it won't be won by soldiers in the Andean mountains -- alone. The war on drugs will only be won when all of our citizens are enlisted as foot soldiers. When all of our citizens recognize the threat of drugs, and when all are prepared to do something about it -- to help restore the sense of values which rules out drug dependency as an acceptable life style.

True, law enforcement solutions alone will never solve the drug problem. We must also reduce the demand for drugs. We must

provide more and better programs of prevention, education, rehabilitation and treatment. But, all the while, we must keep up a sustained law enforcement effort.

In all of these efforts, our goal must be clear. 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, a Sandra Day O'Connor and yes, a Barbara Bush.

That is a goal toward which we all can, and should, persevere. Thank you.