



Department of Justice

"GOALS IN THE WAR ON DRUGS"

REMARKS

BY

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AT A

LUNCHEON OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA
LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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I am honored to join you today for the presentation of the Strom Thurmond Awards for Excellence in Law Enforcement. I especially salute those of you in law enforcement who play a brave part in the war on drugs. You have faced rough duty out there on the streets and I offer you sincere tribute. Today let's 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. This talk 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 our 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. South

Carolina alone will receive over \$5.7 million in grants from our Department of Justice. This award constitutes an over threefold increase from the \$1.7 million your state received in 1989, with additional funds to come, as they did today, from our Asset Forfeiture program. 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, which 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, one of the reasons our Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees are so important.

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 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.

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. At noon today I presented checks totalling \$474,866 to five state and local agencies including the Greenville Police Department, the South Carolina Highway Patrol, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Orangeburg County Sheriff's Department and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. Since the Department of Justice proposed the concept of equitable sharing, South Carolina

law enforcement agencies have received over \$4.6 million for their assistance in combatting criminal enterprise.

In South Carolina you are fortunate as well to have an excellent Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, directed by Becky Plyer in our U.S. Attorney's office. The past year has been a busy one; there have been a number of conferences for state and local law enforcement officials on critical issues such as crack cocaine and asset forfeiture.

In Charleston, Greenville and Columbia, an innovative series of seminars titled "Law Enforcement and Schools: A Partnership for Safe Schools" brought together school administrators and law enforcement officials from across the state. This program -- a cooperative effort between the FBI, the State Department of Education, the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, the South Carolina Highway Patrol and many other law enforcement agencies -- had as its goal: "make the schools safe for the kids". Defeating problems such as youth violence and drugs in our school systems will require just the sort of resourcefulness and commitment demonstrated by your Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee.

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 South Carolina 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 at the Cartagena Summit to arrive at ways in which cooperation can be enhanced to strengthen comprehensive assaults against the production, trafficking, and consumption of illegal drugs. Two weeks ago, as a follow up to that summit, I met with my law enforcement counterparts from the Organization of American States in Ixtapa, Mexico, to help frame a hemisphere-wide effort to crack down on drug trafficking and money laundering. And we mean business.

A vital part of this effort will be the United Nations Drug Enforcement Convention. With valuable help from Senator Thurmond, 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-traffickers; 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.

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.