



Department of Justice

STATEMENT

OF

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE

THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS
ABUSE AND CONTROL
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

OPERATION WEED AND SEED

ON

MAY 20, 1992

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Select Committee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss Operation Weed and Seed, the Administration's new initiative to combat violent crime and drug trafficking in targeted neighborhoods and to revitalize these areas with social services and economic opportunities.

Weed and Seed is a community-based, comprehensive, multi-agency approach to combatting violent crime, drug use and gang activity in high-crime neighborhoods. The goal of this strategy is to "weed out" crime from targeted neighborhoods and then to "seed" the targeted sites with a wide range of crime and drug prevention programs and human service agency resources to prevent crime from reoccurring.

The ultimate objective is to maximize coordination and involve the entire community in this effort to revitalize crime-ridden neighborhoods. If we are to reclaim America's communities from the terror of violent crime, we must work together on every level of government and with the private sector. Law enforcement alone cannot solve these problems. The coordination of law enforcement and social programs is essential to the revitalization of these communities, and they must work together, mutually reinforcing one another. Law enforcement is not a substitute for social programs, and social programs cannot be pursued instead of -- or at the expense of -- aggressive law enforcement policies. No social program or community activity can flourish in an atmosphere poisoned by violent crime and drug abuse.

Elements of Weed and Seed Strategy

The Weed and Seed strategy involves four basic elements:

1. Law Enforcement: Eliminating Crime and Violence.

Building on a partnership among State, local and Federal law enforcement agencies, this element focuses on enforcement, adjudication, prosecution, and offender management activities designed to target, apprehend and incapacitate violent street criminals and criminal organizations that terrorize neighborhoods and account for a disproportionate percentage of criminal activity.

Criminals will be prosecuted under Federal law when possible. Programs such as the Department of Justice's Project Triggerlock target violent armed offenders for prosecution in Federal court to take advantage of tough Federal firearms laws. Between April 1991 and February 1992, Project Triggerlock resulted in approximately 4,500 cases charged and had a 91 percent conviction rate.

Other activities will focus on special cooperative enforcement operations such as repeat or violent offenders, intensified narcotics investigations, targeted prosecutions, victim/witness protection and services, and the elimination of narcotics trafficking organizations operating in targeted areas. Again, it must be emphasized that central to this element is a cooperative partnership between Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors.

Community-Oriented Policing operates in support of the intensive law enforcement suppression activities described above and provides a "bridge" to programs aimed at prevention, intervention and treatment, and neighborhood reclamation and revitalization. Community-oriented policing activities focus increasing police visibility and the development of cooperative relationships between the police and the citizenry in the targeted areas. Techniques such as foot patrols, targeted mobile units, victim referrals to support services and community relations activities will increase positive interaction between the police and the community. The objective is to raise the level of citizen and community involvement in crime prevention activities to solve drug-related problems in neighborhoods and to enhance the level of community security, and to build trust and respect between neighborhood residents and law enforcement.

Community policing is more than simply reacting to crime after it has occurred. As one police chief said recently, "It's getting out front" before a crime is committed. Its citizens and law enforcement working together to solve problems that lead to crime. In areas where community policing has been implemented, residents report increased satisfaction with law enforcement, while law enforcement officials report greater job satisfaction on the part of officers and improved attitudes of the community towards police. New York City has found its community policing demonstration program so successful that it is now working to integrate community policing throughout its police force.

2. Social Services: Providing Hope and Assistance. This element of Weed and Seed is a coordinated set of social programs that will help residents reclaim their lives and their neighborhoods. These programs will include improved access to primary and prenatal health care, drug abuse treatment and prevention, Head Start, job training, after-school and adult education programs, and transportation services to link inner-city workers to suburban jobs.

Central to this strategy is that such services will be visible, on-site, and accessible. This provides our best chance of breaking this cycle of drug use, poverty, and unemployment. By breaking the cycle, we eliminate the demand for drugs, thereby putting drug organizations and dealers out of business.

3. Creating Jobs and Economic Opportunity. This element focuses on creating jobs, wealth, and opportunity in neighborhoods where businesses have been driven out by violent crime and drug trafficking. Up to \$400 million of the Weed and Seed money earmarked in the budget will go to neighborhoods designated as Enterprise Zones by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The Administration's Enterprise Zone proposal has been carefully designed to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and job creation. An additional \$100 million will go to Weed and Seed neighborhoods that are not designated as Enterprise Zones.

4. Housing and Community Development. Public housing developments in Weed and Seed areas will be eligible for HUD's drug elimination grants and modernization funds. In addition,

housing vouchers, and community development block grant funds for recreational areas, rehabilitation of private housing, and other community infrastructure improvement will be provided.

Implementation of Weed and Seed

Weed and Seed requires six basic steps for implementation:

1. Organize a Weed and Seed Steering Committee, which will be coordinated by the U.S. Attorney and comprised of Federal, State, and local law enforcement including local prosecutors; Federal, State, and local school, housing and other social services officials; private sector foundations and corporations; and most important, representatives from community-based organizations. Depending on the requirements of the local community, a Law Enforcement Task Force could be established to coordinate the "weed" activities and a Neighborhood Revitalization Committee to coordinate the "seed" programs.

2. The Steering Committee selects a target neighborhood. Factors that should be considered in selecting a target neighborhood include: the presence of grass roots community organizations open to the Weed and Seed concept; high incidence of gang-related violence; high rates of homicide, aggravated assault, rape and other violent crime; high number of drug arrests; high dropout rate; high unemployment rate; and the presence of public housing developments, including high-rise apartments.

3. The Steering Committee will conduct a needs assessment of the targeted neighborhood. The type of information developed

in step two will be used to assess the problems and needs of the targeted neighborhood in relationship to the program goals and objectives. The assessment will identify problems in the targeted neighborhood and inventory the available resources to address them.

4. Existing and new resources to meet the objectives selected in step 3 will be identified. These resources include funding, staff for various programs and activities, and materials and equipment.

5. The program activities and human services that will be implemented to achieve each of the objectives will be identified. A plan will be prepared specifying who will be responsible for administering the activity, what it will involve, where the activity will be conducted, when it will be done, how it will be implemented and how much it will cost.

6. An implementation schedule will be developed with target dates for the completion of major activities.

Evaluations

Evaluation is an important component of the Weed and Seed program. Each funded program will be evaluated to determine to what extent the program was implemented as intended and what impact the program had on the stated problem. The evaluation will be organized to allow for a comparison of baseline and post-Weed and Seed quantitative data, such as the number of investigations and arrests, and the rates of high school graduation, infant mortality, poverty, and teen pregnancy. The

evaluation will also measure qualitative data such as offender characteristics, displacement of criminal activity, and level of citizen satisfaction. In addition, the Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice will conduct a national evaluation of Weed and Seed. Results of these evaluations will be crucial as we progress in implementing future sites.

Phase I -- Fiscal Year 1991-- Pilot Sites

Building on programs developed independently in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Department of Justice initiated pilot sites for Weed and Seed in two locations in Fiscal Year 1991. The Weed and Seed strategy is being implemented in Kansas City, Missouri, and Trenton, New Jersey, as described below.

Prototype: The Philadelphia Experience.

Several programs in Philadelphia served as catalysts for the Department's Operation Weed and Seed program. The Violent Traffickers Project (VTP) is a joint Federal-State task force organized in August 1988 to address the severe problems of drug trafficking and drug-related violence in neighborhoods in the Philadelphia area. VTP consists of agents and officers of the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Philadelphia Police; the District Attorney's Office; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Immigration and Naturalization Service; the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office; the Pennsylvania State Police and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Violent Traffickers Project is part of the President's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program

(OCDETF). Between November 1988 and July 1991, 551 individuals have been indicted as a result of VTP investigations. The conviction rate is over 99 percent.

As a result of the success of VTP in targeting and removing violent offenders from the community, a number of neighborhood-based revitalization efforts began to flourish. For example, in the Spring Garden neighborhood, following successful law enforcement drug sweeps, residents began and maintained vigils to keep the neighborhood free of drug dealers. These highly successful activities resulted in providing a safe environment in which residents can live and business can develop and flourish. In addition, law enforcement officials, working out of a police mini-station in the neighborhood, and community residents are working together to revitalize the neighborhood, renovating former crack houses, cleaning up playgrounds, and encouraging businesses to open in the area.

Another program that led to the creation of Weed and Seed is Philadelphia's Federal Alternatives to State Trials (F.A.S.T.) Program. In July 1991, the Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), through its Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), provided funding for this joint effort of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and the Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Under the F.A.S.T. project, selected drug and firearm cases are transferred to Federal jurisdiction through the U.S. Attorney's Office. The transfer from local to Federal

jurisdiction substantially increases the likelihood that accused local drug dealers and other armed career criminals will remain in custody from the moment of arrest forward by holding them in Federal detention facilities pending trial. In addition, defendants receive expedited trials in the Federal district court. If convicted, they are subject to Federal sentencing guidelines and/or Federal mandatory minimums and incarcerated in a Federal facility.

Operation PEARL (Prevention, Education, Action, Rehabilitation and Law Enforcement), a Federal/State/city effort to rehabilitate the Mantua neighborhood was launched in 1990, and resulted in increased law enforcement and social services in the targeted neighborhood. The Bureau of Justice Assistance provided a planning grant to help PEARL get started. President Bush visited Mantua in July 1990, and applauded the joint efforts of government and the neighborhood residents to conquer problems brought on by drug trafficking. A second PEARL program --PEARL II-- began operating in a South Philadelphia neighborhood in October 1991.

Pilot Site: Kansas City, Missouri

In August 1991, the Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded Kansas City, Missouri, \$200,000 for a program organized by the U.S. Attorney and the Kansas City Police Department. The Kansas City Weed and Seed program has been expanded, and the working group, comprised of law enforcement, human service agencies and community organizations, has made substantial progress in

developing its implementation plan for both the "weeding" and "seeding" components. A target neighborhood, the Ivanhoe section of the city, has been selected. The "seeding" effort is focusing on demolishing dangerous buildings and creating incentives for development, and it will include forfeiture of houses used for drug trafficking and abandoned property and conversion of those into affordable housing.

In addition, the Kansas City project is rebuilding neighborhood alliances to get residents involved in maintaining the security of their community through neighborhood cleanups, removing abandoned cars, fixing and replacing street lights, and removing or painting over graffiti. The seeding effort also aims to encourage businesses to relocate to the area and has established a "Hub House" in the neighborhood--a one-stop center to provide residents with information on a wide range of programs available to them, including drug treatment and referral, family therapy, education, counseling, child development programs, youth services, housing services, and opportunities available through the Small Business Administration.

Key participants in the Kansas City Weed and Seed program currently involve: Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors; the regional office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the Small Business Administration; the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance; the Ad Hoc Group Against Crime, a neighborhood-based organization; and other local government and community groups.

Pilot Site: Trenton, New Jersey.

In September 1991, BJA awarded Trenton, New Jersey, \$284,000 to further demonstrate the Weed and Seed strategy. This Weed and Seed project is targeted at four neighborhoods and is proceeding with very good results. Under the direction of the State Attorney General, and in close coordination with the United States Attorney, and the City of Trenton, the project has developed a four-pronged approach to fighting the war on drugs and crime in these neighborhoods:

(1) The Violent Offender Removal Program (VORP) is designed to target, apprehend, and incapacitate violent street gang members and disrupt drug trafficking networks in and around the designated Safe Haven Zones. VORP has resulted in the arrest of 69 persons since the beginning of this program.

(2) The Trenton Weed and Seed program was recently awarded an additional \$743,142 to fund community policing activities. The Community Policing Program is designed to emphasize the need for police officers and residents within the community to work together in creative ways to address the problems of crime at the neighborhood level. Community policing has been implemented in each of the four targeted neighborhoods and has met with high praise from both residents and local police.

(3) The Safe Haven Program is designed to provide an alternative to the dangers of the streets by bringing together education, community, law enforcement, health, recreation and other groups to provide alternative activities for high-risk

youth and other residents of the community. Three public middle schools in three of the targeted neighborhoods are being used after regular school hours from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. to house these programs. In addition to programs for high-risk youth, the Safe Haven Project also includes a number of programs that are adult-oriented. The number of community participants at one of the Safe Haven sites has averaged between 85 and 125 per evening, with as many as 200 on several occasions.

(4) The Community Revitalization and Empowerment Program is in the planning stages and should be underway soon. A number of human service agencies have been identified to participate in this "seed" effort, including: the Delaware Valley United Way, Urban League of Greater Trenton, Boys and Girls Clubs, DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, and the Trenton School District, among others. In addition, the Mayor of Trenton has held a number of town meetings in the targeted areas to assess community needs and the types of social services to be made available in the "Safe Havens." Project participants also have signed a memorandum of agreement specifying their commitment to the program.

Phase II -- fiscal year 1992 -- Demonstration Program

In Fiscal Year 1992, the Department will be expanding the pilot phase of Weed and Seed to additional demonstration sites. This initiative shows great promise, but much work remains to be done to refine the design of the program. Resources are limited in Fiscal Year 1992, so the demonstration program can be expanded to

only 16 cities. The cities participating in Phase II are Atlanta, GA; Chelsea, MA; Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Fort Worth, TX; Santa Ana, CA; Madison, WI; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; San Diego, CA; Seattle, WA; Washington, DC; and Wilmington, DE.

On January 7-8, 1992, United States Attorneys from the 16 cities participated in a Planning Conference hosted by the Department of Justice. At the planning conference, the U.S. Attorneys were fully briefed on the requirements for the Weed and Seed program. In addition, on February 11-12, 1992, the Office of Justice Programs hosted a Weed and Seed Technical Assistance Workshop to assist representatives from the 16 sites in developing their Weed and Seed programs and preparing their applications. The agenda included presentations on organizing and planning Weed and Seed programs, the application of community policing, and the role of prevention. The Workshop also provided participants an opportunity to review application requirements and to discuss the mechanics of preparing the application. All applications from the sites were received by the March 20, 1992 deadline and have been analyzed by impartial peer review panels, composed of law enforcement officers, prosecutors, social service providers, and community planners. All 16 sites met the Weed and Seed criteria have been notified of their selection for funding. These sites will receive approximately \$1.1 million from the Department of Justice to begin implementation of the Weed and Seed strategy. An award of about half that amount will be made

this year, and the remainder will be available in Fiscal Year 1993, subject to Congressional appropriations.

Training and technical assistance will also be made available in this fiscal year to other jurisdictions wishing to develop Weed and Seed programs.

Los Angeles Weed and Seed

On May 7, 1992, the President announced a \$19 million "Weed and Seed" operation designed to help resuscitate blighted and burned Los Angeles communities.

The \$19 million "Weed and Seed" program will include funding from the Department of Justice and numerous other Federal agencies. The Department of Justice, in consultation with the other Federal agencies, State and local officials and the private sector, will identify specific hard-hit neighborhoods in Los Angeles for this targeted aid.

A combination of social service and law enforcement, all backed by State, local and strong private sector involvement, is essential for the success of "Weed and Seed" in Los Angeles. A coordinated and extensive social and health investment will follow the law enforcement efforts to address the needs of the blighted areas. Such a coordinated investment of public and private resources will give law abiding citizens the kind of economic and social opportunities that breathe life into neighborhoods.

President's Fiscal Year 1993 Initiative

Phase III of Operation Weed and Seed is planned for implementation in Fiscal Year 1993. As you know, Mr. Chairman, President Bush has requested (in his Fiscal Year 1993 budget proposal) \$500 million to substantially expand Weed and Seed activities. This \$500 million has been identified in the budgets of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund programs such as public housing drug elimination grants; the Department of Health and Human Services for community partnership grants, drug treatment, and improved access to health care and to provide Head Start for one year for eligible children; the Department of Labor for Job Training Partnership Act programs that provide job training for high-risk youth and adults; and the Department of Education to increase educational opportunities and drug education and prevention programs.

Some \$30 million has been requested in the Fiscal Year 1993 budget of the Department of Justice to support Weed and Seed to expand the number of demonstration sites. An additional one million dollars has been requested in the Department of Transportation fiscal year 1993 budget to support reverse commuter demonstration grants to facilitate movement of inner city residents to suburban jobs.

Notwithstanding the President's substantial request for additional Federal resources, I want to stress, Mr. Chairman, that Weed and Seed is not simply another Federal grant program.

While additional funding will be allocated for this initiative, its success is not dependent upon new Federal dollars. Rather, its success will depend, in large part, on coordinating private sector efforts and existing Federal grants and State formula block grants and redirecting these resources in a comprehensive effort to assist these targeted sites. The Justice Department is working with officials from HUD, HHS, Labor, Education, Agriculture, Transportation, Treasury, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy to coordinate the manner in which Federal resources will be directed to this initiative in Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, and I am pleased to report that they have been very enthusiastic about this critical effort.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, by implementing this Weed and Seed strategy, Federal, State, and local governments, law enforcement and human service agencies, the private sector and community residents can form a partnership which will give neighborhoods the best chance to significantly affect the problems of violent crime, drug trafficking, and gang activity that terrorizes law-abiding Americans. I appreciate your support and look forward to working with Congress to further this critical effort.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.