

FOR RELEASE
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REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE DICK THORNBURGH
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

TO THE

ANNUAL MEETING OF
SPECIAL AGENTS IN CHARGE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
AND
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 1989
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

I wanted to be here today for two, very simple reasons. First, to thank all of you personally for the jobs you do for the Department of Justice and for the American people. You and those who serve with you in the FBI and the DEA represent the very best in law enforcement in the United States and around the world -- something I first learned as a U.S. Attorney in Pennsylvania and haven't forgotten since.

Second, I want to express to you my support and respect -- as well as that of President Bush and his entire administration -- for your work and your commitment to the protection of the many communities which you serve.

It is because of that respect that I want to speak candidly to you today -- which means I haven't come here to tell you everything is perfect or to say that we've found all the answers to all our problems...because we haven't.

While your efforts encompass, particularly in the Bureau, a far-ranging list of assignments, you will not be surprised to learn that I will focus most of my remarks today on drugs -- the number one concern of the American people.

Now I know I said I would speak candidly, and I will.

- We have not won the war on drugs, nor are we even waging the

war as effectively and as widely as we want to, or hope to.

- We have not stopped the flow of drugs into this nation, nor have we stopped the flow of blood in the communities ravaged by the violence it spawns.

- We have not stopped kids from wasting their lives on drugs, or of losing their lives to drugs, and, sadly, neither have we stopped the danger you face in the line of duty, as we were tragically reminded last month through the loss of DEA Special Agent Everett Hatcher who gave his life while doing his job -- an event which occasioned me to authorize payment of \$250,000 for information leading to the apprehension of the prime suspect in this dreadful crime.

There are, however, some positive developments. Hitting the drug lords where it hurts requires putting them in prison and seizing their profits. And arrests and convictions and forfeitures are today all at record levels.

There are, additionally, some positive changes in attitudes. The most recent Department of Health and Human Services-sponsored survey of illegal drug use among American high school seniors, for example, shows drug use in this population at its lowest level since the survey began in 1975, including significant

decreases in cocaine use for the second year in a row. This, of course, does not reflect drug use among school dropouts, where the more serious problem resides. But it is a start.

There are changes too, which as a result of the American peoples' clearer perceptions and attitudes, have brought about substantive changes in the government's response to the drug problem and in the practical application of laws and their enforcement -- changes which are also for the better.

Greater funding for law enforcement -- and for all other aspects of our anti-drug efforts -- is being asked for by the President and is being delivered by Congress.

We now have federal provisions for using the death penalty against those who commit murder as part of their illegal drug activities.

Internationally, cooperation between nations throughout the world is at an all time high as evidenced by the commitment of over 100 nations to a new United Nations Drug Convention which I was privileged to sign for the United States last December in Vienna -- a convention which has some real law enforcement teeth in it and which I hope and expect will soon be ratified in the U.S. Senate.

DEA's leadership role in our international efforts has been of vital importance. Jack Lawn's chairmanship of IDEC -- the International Drug Enforcement Conference -- as I learned during our recent trip to South America -- has greatly enhanced cooperative efforts in the Western Hemisphere.

At the state and local levels we see similar cooperative responses through the OCDETF program -- which I am very pleased to say has the full support of Bill Sessions, Jack Lawn, myself and all participating U.S. Attorneys, as well as through the Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees convened by the U.S. Attorneys, one of the very best of which operates here in Arizona under the leadership of Steve McNamee.

My recognition of yours and our progress in these areas doesn't deny that the drug problem remains massive. Nor does it make our challenge any less great. It does show, however, that we are making a substantive difference.

But if we are to continue to make a difference, we must continue to have help. To achieve what President Bush calls a "kinder, gentler nation" for all Americans, we will need public support to be rougher and tougher on some Americans -- those involved in drug trafficking and drug-related terrorism in our inner cities.

But it's more than that. We need more recruits in the war against drugs. As I told a somewhat surprised audience last week: "If we want to lose the war on drugs, we can just leave it to law enforcement."

Now, obviously, this isn't meant to reflect adversely on those of you who are daily putting your lives on the line to pursue the drug traffickers.

But it does mean that all Americans have to realize that this war must ultimately be won on the battlefield of values -- the positive values of a drug-free lifestyle versus the despair and ruin of a drug-dependent lifestyle.

And in our struggle for the soul of the next generation, we will prevail only 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.

- And, when in inner-city schools, the dealer with the gold chains and flashy cars 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 family, in churches and synagogues and, with your help, in the community -- because it is not a struggle over laws, but over values. The values of self-respect and self-reliance, and above all, the integrity of the individual mind and spirit to function as God designed them to function.

So that is where we stand. No where near the end of our journey, but at least on our way, and with ever-growing support for our efforts from all quarters.

But, as I said, that does not lessen our challenge. In fact, it makes it even greater.

The fact that more funds are being made available to us, for example, means we must use those funds more efficiently and more effectively. And that means an end to turf wars, jurisdictional disputes and anything other than a full-fledged commitment to total cooperation between and among all law enforcement agencies.

To quote the President who spoke on this issue last week:
"The effectiveness of the Federal Government's effort to combat drugs has been hampered, sometimes severely, by inadequate cooperation and coordination among departments and agencies involved in the anti-drug abuse effort. There have been struggles over turf and budgets, and too often preoccupation with parochial interests...This must end."

I understand the intramural fights that come as a result of overlapping jurisdiction and a failure to communicate. I dealt with them as a U.S. Attorney and as an Assistant Attorney General, I dealt with them as a Governor, and I deal with them now. And like the President, I am sure you agree, "This must end."

Let me give you three specific examples of how I think we can do better:

- I am aware that jurisdictional disputes between DEA and Customs have impeded some drug enforcement operations in the field. Last fall the Office of Legal Counsel issued an opinion holding that Customs agents could participate in Title 21 investigations only if they had been cross-designated by DEA and were under DEA supervision and control. Last month, Justice and Treasury issued a joint

memorandum to institute such procedures and encouraging DEA and Customs SACs to enter into agreements to implement them. Jack Lawn and I will expect a report within the next 30 days on the arrangements made within each of our DEA offices.

- Many of our most successful victories in complex cases have been achieved through early cooperation between the case agent and the Assistant U.S. Attorney. It is absolutely essential for investigators to work closely with the U.S. Attorney's office in every aspect of their work so the prosecutorial consequences of your joint efforts can be maximized. Agents who "work" a case without close collaboration with the prosecutor can sometimes "lose" it before it gets to court.

- Finally, in the area of asset forfeitures, two-thirds of the dollar value of which require sometimes lengthy judicial intervention. Last year, we persuaded Congress to appropriate \$22 million earmarked to hire forfeiture specialists for our U.S. Attorneys' offices. This will add 170 assistants and an equal number of support personnel to our forfeiture effort. Training sessions are now going forward, utilizing only the best experts -- including former special agent Larry Finn, until recently head of the FBI's Forfeiture Unit in the Legal Counsel Division -- and we're

negotiating with another expert from DEA's Chief Counsel's Office. We expect each of your agencies to work hand-in-glove with the U.S. Attorneys to maximize the effect of this prolific program -- a real example of poetic justice -- which recycles the narco-trafficker's ill-gotten gains into more effective law enforcement.

No one possesses a magic wand that can make all of our problems or frustrations disappear. But don't think that those problems are unrecognized or unappreciated by Washington.

In the pay disparity area -- to take an example that I know is of great concern to each of you -- work is moving forward to better understand the problem and get it resolved.

The Pay Study Commission, the formation of which was authorized by Congress late last year, has been established and has held its initial meeting, with a second meeting scheduled for April 11th. In fact, in case you haven't heard, the Justice Department representatives to the Commission are three men whose presence on this panel I'm sure you will appreciate: Bill Sessions, Jack Lawn, and my own assistant for management and administration, Murray Dickman.

The Commission's work is moving forward. Staff members will be in the field conducting interviews in May. You can talk to them directly as well as through your various advisory committees -- so that the final report to Congress expected by late summer or early fall will reflect your concerns.

From the President on down, those in leadership roles in our government see the problems and are struggling to deal with them -- from bureaucratic snags, to pay inequities, to legal shortcomings which stymie your efforts, to a lack of understanding among the public. And while nothing ever happens as quickly as we would wish, I guarantee you that as long as I am Attorney General, I will do all that I can to work with you and for you in fixing the problems, in meeting your needs as professionals and special agents with important jobs to do, and as men and women with families to nurture and care for.

Thank you again for your fine work and for your great commitment. In the face of an unrelenting challenge and against tremendous odds, you stand on the front lines of a great national endeavor. While it may seem never-ending, take heart from the honest progress that is being made because of your efforts and take pride in the knowledge that you are making a difference in America -- a difference for the better.

I look forward to having the chance to visit personally with you during my travels in the months and years ahead and to standing with you to help guarantee that first civil right of every American: the right to be free of the fear of crime, in our homes, on our streets and in our communities.

Thank you and may God bless you in your endeavors.