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# Department of Justice

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REMARKS

OF

ARNOLD I. BURNS  
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

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ACQUISITIONS

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Today, I am going to talk to you about the War Against Drugs. I am not going to be speaking about the rhetorical War Against Drugs that the American public is often regaled with. I am going to be talking about the real live, on the ground War Against Drugs being waged on a daily basis by people like you in this room, who are literally in the trenches, about the sordid dangerous front-line War Against Drugs in which many of our comrades have fallen. The enemy is powerful, the opposing troops are well-organized, well-financed, and infinite in number. The odds against achieving our goal of a drug-free society often seem overwhelming.

I want to begin by talking about our new direction -- our new and renewed emphasis on cooperation. As you well know, law enforcement is a matter of constant effort and vigilance but nowhere is that more true than here in a state on the Southwestern border of our nation. And, nothing enhances that effort and vigilance more than cooperation. Cooperation among federal, state and local law enforcement is critical to our battle against crime. We have seen the results of joint operations here in New Mexico in the accomplishments of Operation Pipeline and in many other LECC successes. But isolated examples of law enforcement coordination and cooperation, however positive, are not enough to turn the tide against drug-related crime in New Mexico or in the nation.

Triumph in the war on drugs is going to require the institutionalization of vigilance and teamwork in the form both of inter- and intra-agency coordination and cooperative efforts

of previously unprecedented scope and scale. For as you, the law enforcement leaders and criminal justice officials of New Mexico know, securing and safeguarding our nation's Southwest border is a task of daunting dimensions:

- \* We know that in the past more than 95% of the illegal aliens apprehended, crossed that border from Mexico, and we know that for every illegal alien we apprehended, 2 or 3 crossed over without detection.
- \* And with the increasing influx of illegal entries, crime and violence have surged, with attacks on border patrol agents, drug smuggling and bandit activity growing dramatically between 1985 and 1986.
- \* Intelligence indicates that 30% of the marijuana and 35% of the heroin brought into the United States comes from Mexico. And Mexico is the transit point for about 30% of the cocaine which enters the country.
- \* The border covers more than 2000 land miles including some of the most desolate and difficult terrain in the country, as well as the adjacent waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean.

No doubt about it, the southwest border presents a law enforcement challenge of massive magnitude.

Some call our goals impossible. Can we tackle the problems that face us? Can we respond to the challenges ahead? Can we marshal our forces and defeat our enemies?

I stand here today to tell you that despite the awesome difficulties, together -- federal, state and local agencies working hand-in-hand to attack both the supply and demand sides of the drug problem -- we can do it. We can choke off the flow of illegal aliens, drugs, weapons, illicit currency and the other contraband which is smuggled across the porous U.S.-Mexican border, and we can destroy the drug traffickers' markets by reducing the demand for their life destroying products. Moreover, we must do this. It is our duty. It is our responsibility. The future well-being of the nation depends upon our success in combatting the drug problem. As the 1981 Presidential Task Force on Violent Crime found, the most important thing federal, state and local law enforcement can do to control violent crime nationwide is to decrease the flow of illegal drugs into this country. During the five and a half years since that report was issued we have made many gains in the war against drugs and drug related crime, on both the supply and demand sides.

- \* We are better organized and working more effectively with state and local law enforcement through the LECC program and innumerable joint operational initiatives.
- \* Federal resources devoted to drug law enforcement, prevention, and treatment have tripled since the Reagan Administration began. The 1987 budget is 220% higher than the 1981 budget. And most of the law enforcement, prevention, treatment and research efforts begun in the

1987 drug abuse initiative are continued in the 1988 budget.

\* In the Department of Justice alone drug-related funding has grown by over 238 percent from the Carter Administration base of \$365.5 million in '81 to an anticipated \$1.237 billion in 1988.

\* The Administration's 1986 interdiction budget was \$821.9 million. The 1987 budget is over \$1.3 billion.

These figures demonstrate six-years of sensible, carefully planned continuing and incremental federal increases and program enhancements for the war against drugs. And in fiscal year 1987 total federal spending for the anti-drug effort will be nearly \$4 billion -- a 220 percent jump. And in 1988 it will be over \$3 billion, which will still represent a 145 percent increase over 1981. And despite the overall decrease, in terms of federal law enforcement there will be \$72 million more spent in 1988 than we spent in 1987. So, our commitment remains strong. But, federal resources alone are not the answer.

We must make the best possible use of all law enforcement resources. the nation cannot afford turf battles, or the fragmentation and overlap of law enforcement assets, in the critical area of drug enforcement and interdiction. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is more important to the domestic defense of our country.

It is vital that you understand the key aspects of our overall strategy to combat illegal drugs and how you, law

enforcement coordination people, and Operation Alliance are taking us closer to the day we achieve our goal of vanquishing the scourge of illegal drugs and drug trafficking.

Let's talk about Operation Alliance.

As announced last August by Vice President Bush, in his capacity as head of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, and Attorney General Meese, as Chairman of the National Drug Policy Board, Operation Alliance is the most ambitious border interdiction program in our nation's law enforcement history. Initiated six months ago as a program to be phased in over a two year period in four stages, Operation alliance involves cooperation with the government of Mexico as well as coordination of the resources and efforts of more than 20 federal departments and agencies and literally hundreds of their state and local counterparts.

The primary agencies involved in the actual interdiction activity are the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Coast Guard, and DEA. U.S. Customs has primary responsibility for air and ports of entry interdiction. The U.S. Border Patrol has been charged with land interdiction responsibility between the ports of entry, and the U.S. Coast Guard has primary responsibility for sea interdiction. Each agency is conducting separate operations as a part of the umbrella heading of Operation Alliance. These agencies are supported by state and local law enforcement agencies in border states and by several other Federal agencies.

Operation Alliance is coordinated by the Joint Command Group made up of federal and state law enforcement representatives including: Major Neil Curran of the New Mexico State Police who will be speaking to you a little later this afternoon, Colonel James Adams of the Texas Department of Public Safety, and Charles Casey of the California Department of Public Safety, as well as representatives of Customs, INS, DEA, FBI, Coast Guard, the Southwestern Region United States Attorneys, ATF, IRS, and since February, the U.S. Marshals Service.

The Operation Alliance Joint Command Group has twelve members commanding in the field and is headquartered in El Paso, Texas, where the full-time staff is housed in co-located space. Alan Eliason of the Border Patrol is the Senior Tactical Coordinator in El Paso and I understand he too is here today with Major Curran to answer your questions and share more about what Operation Alliance means to New Mexico.

During this, the first year of Operation Alliance, the program consists primarily of six major enforcement projects. In each, several different law enforcement agencies have been teamed up as an "alliance" to intensify interdiction at and between the ports of entry along the border and in the adjoining waters and airspace over the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean.

Six major initiatives you may already be familiar with have been incorporated into and expanded as part of Operation Alliance.



- \* Operation Baseline, which concentrates Border Patrol and DEA efforts in high crime zones along the border between ports of entry and redirects the focus of law enforcement resources to follow the shifting patterns of smuggler activity into new areas;
- \* Operation Blackjack in the Gulf and Operation Blue Pennant in the Pacific, in which the Coast Guard is conducting regional maritime operations and providing intelligence and near shore interdiction support in the vicinity of the border;
- \* Operation Full Press, which under DEA management monitors both U.S. and Mexican intelligence, equipment assets, and investigations in support of Operation Baseline and all other joint investigation/interdiction activities, including Operation Bluefire, which involves more than sixteen intensified activities by the Customs Service including inspections, surveillance, public education and support services, all coordinated with dozens of federal, state and local agencies; and
- \* Operation Lions Share, which is coordinated by ATF to target firearms and explosives trafficking and drug traffickers who use firearms.

Now, obviously, these new initiatives require manpower. We need more personnel dedicated to the challenges ahead. Good people will have to be found, and trained, and good people of the

caliber of the men and women we already have in our cadre are hard to find.

Assuming Congressional cooperation, we anticipate that Operation Alliance will be at full strength in 18 to 24 months.

As I have said, we have accomplished a great deal already. The first six months of Alliance already have been very productive in a number of areas. We are very definitely making progress. For example:

Seizures:

- \* Since August 1986 narcotics seizures made by the various agencies involved in Operation Alliance activities total more than 700, including over 72,700 pounds of marijuana and over 8335 pounds of cocaine. The numbers of drug seizures and the quantities involved are escalating dramatically.
- \* Customs has also seized \$4.5 million in money and monetary instruments and more than \$17.5 million in contraband merchandise.
- \* ATF seizures include: 195 handguns, 325 rifles, 73 silencers, 26 machine guns, 14 destructive devices, 25,918 rounds of ammunition, and 13 pounds of other explosives.
- \* Pending forfeitures include over 100 vehicles ranging from sportscars to tractor trailers, \$66,263.00 in cash, aircraft and buildings.

And this is just the beginning -- these seizures are from just the first six months of Operation Alliance.

Additionally, Operation Alliance activities to date include:

- \* Both selected Customs agents and over 2800 Border Patrol agents have been trained and cross-designated by DEA to provide them with drug investigatory and arrest authority under Title 21; and by the end of this month the Customs Service will have also cross-designated a number of Border Patrol Agents with inspection and seizure authority under Title 19.
- \* Customs has added already 384 agents, inspectors, and other personnel to the Southwest Border and expects to increase that by another 563 positions to a total of 947, by the end of fiscal year 1987.
- \* Two sophisticated Navy E2C radar aircraft have been delivered for use by Customs in the southwest, and, by the end of September at the latest, the Fort Huachuca, Arizona, aerostat radar balloon will be operational. And we expect another five aerostats to be in place and operational by the end of FY 1989. Customs has received an increased FY 87 authorization of \$60.0 million for law enforcement equipment including radios, radar, and marine equipment. (This amount includes the \$38.8 million for air operations and the Arizona aerostat.)

\* The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center has developed Alliance related training for state and local law enforcement personnel to help you effectively focus an attack on the domestic trafficking infrastructure. Information on the availability of the FLETC training is, or will shortly be available from the U.S. Attorney's office. (Materials are being mailed by EOUSA to all U.S. Attorneys this week.)

\* DEA has primary responsibility for providing strategic and tactical narcotic trafficking intelligence, and is responsible for pursuing all domestic and international drug investigations resulting from Operation Alliance. DEA has committed sizable investigative and intelligence resources to support Operation Alliance, including the increase of its permanent special agent work force in southwest border offices by 55 special agents during 1986. In addition, 11 special agents have been added to DEA's offices in Mexico, and this has enhanced the collection of tactical drug interdiction intelligence in Mexico.

In support of this operation, DEA established the U.S. Southwest Border Intelligence Task Force to provide strategic assessments of all aspects of drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States. DEA offices in Mexico support Operation Alliance by reporting to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), on

a daily basis, aircraft sighted at airfields within their geographic areas of responsibility. EPIC then provides the reporting offices and U.S. Customs air interdiction offices along the border with background data on suspect aircraft. EPIC processed 975 aircraft sightings from DEA within a five-month period, of which 50 were positive hits on suspect aircraft. Five of these suspect aircraft were seized following their foreign sighting.

- \* Similarly the FBI will redeploy and redirect some 75 positions from within the OCDETF program to full-time Alliance support; and the FBI is coordinating the Pair Cities Border Liaison Initiative as part of Alliance.
- \* Sixty additional federal prosecutors have been committed to the Southwest Border district U.S. Attorney offices.
- \* Mobile Corridor Operations and Mobile Response Teams made up of multi-agency federal, state and local participants have been organized and are available as a ready interdiction strike force to respond to intelligence on drug smuggling activity throughout the Border region. These are proving very effective. Currently, there are 13 land law enforcement corridors, some of which are located in New Mexico.
- \* The Border Patrol is expected to have an additional 1000 agents in place by the end of FY 88 and has

assumed lead responsibility for interdiction between southwest border ports of entry. The Border Patrol agents are being outfitted with state of the art technology in equipment and sensors, such as infrared night viewing devices and low light level television systems.

- \* The Internal Revenue Service has added 111 agents to handle Alliance-related money laundering and tax investigation cases.
- \* With 26 Alliance-dedicated agents on board, ATF has initiated over 200 investigations involving firearms trafficking to Mexico and has 88 active investigations targeting armed drug smugglers active along the Border, with 192 suspects recommended for prosecution to date.

So Operation Alliance is one big way that we in Washington expect to help you, and how you can help us. Remember, we are in this together. As I have said, we have already accomplished a lot.

There is one other point I want to make: that is to emphasize how your participation in such joint investigations and operations as Alliance and Pipeline can directly enhance your law enforcement programs through the Equitable Sharing Program.

A powerful weapon in our drug enforcement arsenal, available under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, is the seizure and forfeiture of the tools and profits of drug traffickers, thus enabling us both to strip criminals of their working capital and

to share the assets federal agents seize with state and local law enforcement agencies who help in making our cases. In effect, we can pay a bounty out of the traffickers and smugglers pocketbooks for your cooperation in successful operations.

During fiscal year 1985, the Justice Department approved the transfer of more than \$2.5 million to state and local agencies. In fiscal year 1986, this sharing accelerated to \$24.4 million, and sharing for 1987 is estimated at \$28 million, with a 1988 projection for equitable sharing to top \$30 million. It will continue to grow. The potential is enormous.

Of all the dollars deposited in the Asset Forfeiture Fund in FY 86, one in five went to state and local law enforcement agencies.

Ultimately, we want to see sharing of forfeited assets take the place of continued out-and-out grants. Sharing of responsibility. Sharing of benefits. Let's not forget this important, cost-free way that the federal government has been helping the states in the drug war.

The war on drugs brings to mind another, far graver, much different conflict -- our civil war -- and one of its greatest figures.

Near the end of the war, when the fall of the Confederacy was at hand, General Grant invited President Lincoln to come down to visit him at his headquarters at City Point on the James River. As they sat that night around the campfire, Lincoln related some of the anecdotes that were his trademark, and then

sat in silence, looking at the fire. Grant looked up and said, "Mr. President, did you at any time doubt the final success of our cause?" Straightening in his camp chair, then leaning forward and lifting his hand by way of emphasis, Lincoln replied with great solemnity, "No, never for a moment!"

Together we will succeed in our War Against Drugs. I cannot doubt it. No, never for a moment.