KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

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Thank you Dr. Brandenstein. I'd like to acknowledge Morgan Ames and Jeanette Ogles from the Counterdrug Technology Assessment Center, and Chuck DeWitt and John Thomas of the National Institute of Justice. Their expertise and assistance in organizing this most important symposium has been extremely valuable. I would also like to welcome our honorable guests and distinguished members of the scientific community.

This time last year, I met with European leaders to discuss an international strategy to combat drug abuse and drug trafficking. In each country, leaders expressed to me their genuine desire to attack drug trafficking and reduce the economic burden drugs placed on their countries. One of the issues raised during this trip concerned how each country could most effectively screen commercial goods in search of illegal drugs that pass across its borders. Doing so without slowing the flow of legitimate commerce or disrupting trade practices was of major concern.

As a result of these conversations, the Counterdrug Technology Assessment Center at ONDCP has worked closely with the National Institute of Justice to put this conference together to encourage the exchange of information dealing with the non-intrusive inspection of cargo at national ports of entry. Over the next three days, you'll attend a number of sessions explaining the national perspectives and operational needs of various customs agencies along with the latest technologies in countraband detection and cargo inspection. It is my hope that these sessions will provide the opportunity to foster new relationships, strengthen old relationships, and improve cooperation and coordination between the difference nations, governments, and industries represented here today.

Since my visit to Europe last fall, the already rapid pace of political and economic change has accelerated, creating significant implications for international efforts to combat drug trafficking. With the signing of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) and passage of the Maastricht Treaty in France, the emergence of powerful regional economic centers in Europe, North America, and the Pacific rim seems a certainty for the 21st Century. The economic and political implications of free trade zones created within these regional marketplaces are still being sorted out. But, clearly, a single message has been sent to the leaders of governments and businesses around the world—if you are

economy, large or small, rich or poor, was exempted from the flow of drug dollars and the disruption they create in a nation's economic system. No single country, or even a bi-lateral initiative, has ever come close to equalling the systematic dismembering of an international criminal force on the scale of this operation. Although Operation Green Ice did not put the Cali cartel, nor the Sicilian mafia, out of business, we know it has caused major, and in some instances, irreparable damage to their criminal, financial network. Moreover, this operation has sent a very important message to drug dealers worldwide—the international community will not tolerate organized crime.

Just as we share law enforcement expertise to strike against drug trafficking, so too can we combine our technological strengths and developments to fight the drug problem. As we share our research and experimentation in the field of cargo inspection, we will gain better results in this sensitive and often tedious undertaking.

Even at the most elementary level, drug traffickers have at their disposal the highest technological expertise money can buy. And, more often, they have it before it is available to general public. In the United States, for example, even the lowest level dealers used beepers and cellular telephones years before they became commonplace for legitimate professionals. We watched them create the "fast lane" image, which they showcased to corrupt our youth. If the lowest tier drug pushers could afford this high-tech convenience, we can only imagine the unlimited capacity of the kingpins to surround themselves with the latest, state-of-the-art technological equipment. As we develop more sophisticated technological tools, we must be extremely wary of the potential buyers, and create safeguards and methods to verify how various product will be used before we turn them loose in the free market. We must set a standard and come to a consensus. And we must begin now.

Operation Green Ice took nearly two years to reach its successful conclusion. Through our collective efforts to tighten our methods of border control, we must convince drug traffickers that their time is running out.

If we consider some of the elaborate techniques that have been used to smuggle cocaine and heroin into the United States over the past several years, we can get a better understanding of why the development of inspection technology is an urgent concern. Just last year in Miami, U.S. Customs officials became suspicious of a large shipment of toilet paper originating from Venezuela. Besides the peculiarity of shipping paper into the United States where our industry is alive and well, there was another funny thing about this dispatch. The value of the paper itself amounted to only several hundred dollars, while shipping costs were figured at several thousands of dollars. In

addition, agents noticed that many of the containers were damaged, allowing water to seep inside, ruining the product. As it was clear that the shipper had no interest in conserving the paper, agents suspected foul play, unloaded a container and walked inside to inspect it. They observed charred marks close to where the wooden floor met the metal side panels. When they pried open the metal side, they found packages of cocaine pressed inside the walls. Inspection of other containers revealed a total of five thousand pounds of cocaine that were seized. Through checking the shipping documents it was discovered that part of the same shipment went to San Juan and Jacksonville. More cocaine was seized in those cities from inside other containers. In another instance, Miami customs agents detected false walls in the rear of a container through a laser search of a shipment of concrete posts for construction. When the container was measured, it was found to be several feet shorter than its specified dimensions. Inside the walls, they found metal rods holding packages of cocaine bricks. Thirty-two thousand pounds of cocaine were confiscated in this shipment, the largest seizure of cocaine documented by U.S. law enforcement authorities.

Now the cases I have mentioned so far demonstrate the most rudimentary of the technological methods that have come to our attention. It is common knowledge that cocaine and marijuana have been shipped to the U.S. dissolved inside soft drinks. There is the famous case of a cocaine laden drink that landed accidentally on the shelf of a convenience store in Florida. The unsuspecting fellow who purchased it died shortly thereafter from the high concentration of cocaine it contained. The drug dealers had failed to retrieve it from the shipment.

Recently, cocaine has been suspended chemically in plastic and other compounds and molded into a variety of shapes to avoid detection. One of the most clever instances of this was discovered in a shipment of South American yams. Plastic cocaine-loaded phony yams were mixed in with real ones. The fakes had been painted an orange-brown color and coated with false "hairs" that are characteristic of yams from South America. The entire shipment had to be carefully inspected to retrieve these cleverly disguised imposters. The examples are numerous: in New York, cocaine has been found imbedded in aluminum ingots and inside auto engines—the techniques are limited only by the criminal imagination.

I want to mention just one more example to illustrate to you how tedious and costly cargo inspection can be. In 1990, a shipment of plastic bags arrived in San Francisco, supposedly from Taiwan, but the shipment really originated in Hong Kong. This consignment consisted of 2,720 cartons of bags. Fifteen Customs inspectors and members of the National

Guard searched six hours through all 2,720 cartons and discovered heroin in only 59 cartons. But the total heroin seized from the small number of cartons amounted to one thousand pounds of the drug. The commercial costs of this search were astronomical. Costs to the law enforcement agency were equally high with such a large number of agents tied up for the better part of a day on one single inspection. As we are today, our resources allow us to inspect only a very small percentage of cargo. More sophisticated methods would allow us to increase the volume of our inspections, utilize less human resources, and decrease the delay of commercial operations. We must strive to improve our methods of detection and we must do it on an international scale. We must make it increasingly more difficult to smuggle illegal drugs at every important port of entry worldwide.

Critics of the U.S. drug strategy—and trust me, we have a few—constantly decry any new initiative in the law enforcement and interdiction realm, claiming that too little effort has been dedicated to prevention, treatment, and education. However, any serious analysis of the drug problem in the United States reveals that we will win this war by fighting on every possible front. Education, treatment and prevention, no doubt, are of vital importance to our winning the war on drugs. We have consistently increased our request for funding in these areas over the years, and our successes have been remarkable. Nonetheless, the universally-accepted economic principle of supply and demand still applies to the drug market. As the price of cocaine, for example, is driven up, usage invariably goes down. The more drugs we confiscate and the more difficult it is to bring them across the border, the higher the cost becomes. As a result, fewer people, including hard-core addicts, use less available drugs.

That is the purpose of this symposium—to discuss and promote how the advances in non-intrusive cargo inspection technology can curtail supply, such as large quantities of illegal drugs concealed in legitimate commercial shipments.

Last year, for example, approximately 9.5 million containers came into U.S. ports of entry. Those were enormous opportunities to be exploited by the drug traffickers. Unless we can scrutinize large commercial shipments in an efficient and thorough manner, our ability to control the supply of illegal drugs in our streets will be very difficult. And, very costly to our society. In essence, supply and demand control initiatives go hand in hand like a two-salvo punch against drug abuse in our communities.

What the critics ignore in nearly every instance is the remarkable progress that has been made through our efforts to curb consumption of illicit drugs in the

going to survive and prosper in this new era, you must be competitive on an international level. And, if I can take this one step further, to be truly competitive, drugs—which sap the will of our people and the strength of our economies—must be removed from our collective societies.

While offering the promise of economic prosperity, in some ways, the events of the past year have made our job of stopping the flow of drugs even more difficult. To improve economic and cultural ties, it is necessary to open borders to allies and international businesses in order to facilitate the transport of goods and services between nations.

But, we must do so with caution. Drug dealers and international cartels are already taking advantage of these new open partnerships. Through corruption, bribery, and intimidation they readily recruit citizens of every nation to engage in their illicit trade. We must send a strong message that we, too, can cross international boundaries. We must let them know that we, too, can form international partnerships and work together effectively to stop the flow of illicit drugs across our borders. We must let traffickers know that we can and will do everything possible to shut them down. We will be the ones controlling the borders.

Some may suggest that it's far easier to talk of unity and working together, than to actually accomplish it. We all know the considerable obstacles governments face in trying to stop drugs at their borders. Even with the improved technology of the past few years, we recognize that we are stopping only a portion of drugs being transported. Furthermore, we must consider the delays in transportation time and the millions in annual costs to companies. All of these concerns reinforce our determination to work with our international partners to control what crosses our borders, and to minimize the threat of losing important commercial partners, political allies and cultural bonds.

The merit of strengthening such alliances has been proven very recently in one vitally important aspect of our struggle against the drug lords—the seizure of the financial assets of drug traffickers. Last month, Operation Green Ice, a global multi-national law enforcement operation deal financial operators of the Cali cartel a tremendous blow, disrupting several of their functions worldwide. Eight nations pooled together and shared evidence, information and human resources that led to the seizure of $54 million in Cali cartel assets. Of the countries involved in Operation Green Ice, there were "consumer" countries and "producer" countries alike; countries considered to be highly developed as well as some considered to be yet in developing stages with relatively new democracies.

Undoubtedly, a consensus was reached with the realization that no

United States. When I think of how far we have come, I am encouraged—and so is President Bush. As we move toward drug-free neighborhoods, I am happy to report that current adolescent drug use has decreased a remarkable 27 percent since 1988 and occasional cocaine use is down 22 percent. Most notably, we can now sense a shift in attitude on the part of our high school students. Whether the drug in question is cocaine, marijuana or other illicit drugs, our high school students are consistently expressing the attitude that using drugs, even occasionally, is not socially acceptable. These successes, and our continued progress in methods of interdiction, detection, and monitoring, are our overriding goals, not only nationally, but globally. As we secure one nation's borders, the cartels will seek to increase their market share in other nations whose borders have not yet been protected from their poison.

Just as neighborhoods and communities have come together to stand up against drug pushers, countries and entire continents must band together as a united force against the international drug traffickers and kingpins.

Just as the results of Operation Green Ice will impact positively on our communities, so too will our combined efforts to guard our borders in the most inoffensive and least costly and intrusive manner. It is my hope that this symposium will solidify greater international cooperation and effort. The technology for non-intrusive detection has come a long way, but we need to push it forward and develop an operational system that will help secure our borders against illegal cargo shipments.

We, all of us here and those you represent, can only benefit from this exchange of ideas, expertise, and experience.

Thank you.