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ORGANIZED CRIME DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE  
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It is a great pleasure to join you for this important Conference. I don't believe I've ever attended an event with so many prominent officials charged with defending the nation against the onslaught of illegal drugs. Many of you have spent years serving on the front lines of America's long, uphill battle against a drug trade that continues to wreak havoc across the country. I salute OCDETF [O-ce-def] for the outstanding job it's done, and the great service that all of you have given your country.

My speaking to you today reminds me of an incident in the life of President Lincoln during the Civil War. Once, when the Confederate forces were attacking Fort Stevens, the President decided to make an inspection tour of the Union's defenses. He was shown around by the general's aide, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. When Holmes pointed out the enemy lines, Lincoln stood up to get a better view.

The President was wearing his customary tall hat, and immediately there was a crackle of musket fire from the other side. Holmes shouted to the President -- "Get down, you fool!" -- grabbed him and hauled him under cover. An instant later, Holmes cringed as he realized what he'd said. He wondered what kind of disciplinary action would be taken against him. But when Lincoln was leaving, he bade the officer farewell with these words: "Goodbye, Captain Holmes, I'm glad to see you know how to talk to a civilian."

Well, that's somewhat how I feel being here today. However -- even though I may be a civilian in the nation's war on drugs -- I do have the privilege of leading a Department that plays a significant role on several battle fronts. That's what I would like to talk to you about today.

I'd like to give you a brief overview of the Department of Transportation's efforts in law enforcement and drug interdiction. In particular, I want to emphasize the fact that we're here to help -- to work



with all of you in whatever way we can to assist you in your efforts to fight the scourge of drugs across America.

First, the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was established in 1790 for the specific purpose of stopping illegal smuggling. And its role in maritime law enforcement has grown ever since. Today, it is a military service of nearly 40,000 members who man about 250 ships, 2,000 boats, and more than 200 aircraft.

In 1973, the U.S. Coast Guard opened a new front in the fight against the drug trade when it first seized a drug-smuggling vessel on the open seas. The forerunner of the Drug Enforcement Administration knew the location of the vessel and knew it was headed for U.S. shores, but didn't know where it intended to land. The agency did not have authority to operate outside U.S. Customs waters, so it turned to the Coast Guard for help. The Coast Guard has been involved in the drug war ever since.

As Admiral Kime mentioned this morning, the Coast Guard has focused its law enforcement mission over the past decade on the smuggling of narcotics. It is now one of the country's leading agencies in defending our shores against this illegal trade. Its mission is a theater level operation that encompasses every zone of smuggler activity.

In the departure or loading zone in the deep Caribbean, the Coast Guard operates a squadron of ships and aircraft with the U.S. Navy. Foreign countries will often allow our joint squadron some measure of law enforcement activity in their territorial waters. If we're unsuccessful here, we try to apprehend smugglers and their contraband in the transit zone -- particularly at geographic choke points, such as the Windward and Yucatan passages.

When traffickers get to U.S. territorial waters, they may have to contend with a host of agencies acting together to stop them. Patrol boats belonging to the Coast Guard, Navy, and U.S. Customs must coordinate their efforts with local, state, and federal civilian law enforcement agencies based on-shore.



Whatever the detection strategy, and whatever zone of operation, one of the keys to stopping drug smuggling is boarding at sea. The Coast Guard can board any U.S. vessel anywhere without a search warrant if it suspects narcotics may be on board. We obviously do not have this freedom with foreign vessels.

But it is not unusual for a foreign boat carrying drugs to allow us on board. If it denies us permission, Coast Guard Headquarters may coordinate with the State Department and the Justice Department in seeking permission from the foreign government. Usually we're authorized to board the ship. Sometimes the flag state denies the vessel's claim to registry. In that case, the vessel is stateless under international law, and we can treat it as if it were a U.S. vessel.

So how do we measure our success? Of course, like all of you, we count the number of vessels we stop and the amount of drugs we seize. But more important, I think -- and certainly more difficult to quantify -- is the deterrent effect we have on the smuggler. We've forced him to shift production, reduce load size, change routes, use hidden compartments and special containers, and begin counter surveillance operations. This means that those smugglers we don't deter must accept a greater cost of doing business.

In response, we've had to bolster the sophistication of our own operations. We've also enhanced the degree of our cooperation with other government agencies. And that, I believe, is really the bottom line to improving our overall efforts.

Those efforts are taking place in the air as well as on the sea. DOT's Federal Aviation Administration oversees three drug interdiction efforts that I'd like to tell you about briefly.

Last year, the FAA launched Operation "Drop-In" in conjunction with counter-narcotics personnel from the Florida National Guard. The purpose of this operation was to conduct airport ramp checks to locate and investigate aircraft associated with the smuggling of contraband. Operation "Drop-In" investigated suspect aircraft for illegal



registrations, modifications, and other violations. We then shared our results with law enforcement agencies, which can now seize such aircraft if they are suspected of being used in the drug trade.

To date, we've inspected about 19,000 general aviation aircraft. Ten percent were found to be associated with drug trafficking, and 39 have been seized. The success of Operation "Drop-In" has led us to expand our efforts to other border states involved in narcotics interdiction.

During February of this year, the FAA -- along with the U.S. Customs Service and the California National Guard -- conducted another interagency effort called Operation "Millionaire" -- this one in southern California. At three particular Automated Flight Service Stations, 157 aircraft had filed proposed flight plans for destinations in Mexico. Special agents from the FAA were sent to the stations to examine each aircraft using the federal government's interagency law enforcement database. As a result, 82 were targeted as suspicious. The California National Guard notified the appropriate air traffic controllers. They, in turn, advised the aircraft to land at a border entry airport where U.S. Customs could inspect them.

Seventy five airplanes were actually inspected. While the amount of contraband seized was small, I count Operation "Millionaire" a success. It fostered a new level of interagency cooperation both within the federal government and between federal and state agencies. Perhaps we can draw on this experience to expand and enhance our joint efforts against an increasingly sophisticated narcotics network.

There's another good example of interagency cooperation at FAA that I'd like to tell you about. The FAA wanted to find out how much drug abuse was occurring among airmen and what kind of threat to safety this might pose. So beginning in 1988, the FAA matched records from its Airmen Registry Data Base with inmate records from the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. The goal was to determine if inmates had any type of airmen record or held a valid airman certificate. Positive matches were subject to certificate revocation or suspension.



Over a three year period, we checked the records of 47,000 inmates locked up for drug-related crimes. We found over 1,000 inmates that we suspected of possessing airmen certificates. Over 100 records were processed and sent to the appropriate field offices for investigation. Although final figures aren't in yet, already many airmen certificates have been revoked and suspended. In the end, our efforts may amount to a small skirmish in the war on drugs. But our program does show the potential fruits of interagency cooperation when creative thinking is brought to bear on the difficult problems we face.

Our Federal Highway Administration is also lending its hand to the effort to stop drug trafficking through its Drug Interdiction Assistance Program. This program provides funding directly to the states to spur innovative approaches to drug interdiction in the commercial motor vehicle industry. It also provides training and technical assistance to states and other law enforcement agencies.

To date, we've trained more than 8,000 people involved in law enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels representing 46 states. This program is directly responsible for 94 major drug seizures with a total wholesale value of about half a billion dollars, as well as thousands of arrests and numerous vehicle confiscations.

We will continue to encourage the states to target commercial vehicles for drug interdiction and to provide the money and training to help them succeed. Only 14 states are now participating in our Drug Interdiction Grant Program, so there's certainly room for expansion here.

I hope that my brief overview has sparked some new ideas in your minds about how your agencies and the Department of Transportation can better work together against a common enemy -- the drug kingpins and their vast and diverse drug empire. I'm under no illusion of the awesome task we face. And I'm fully aware that you're interested in concrete action, not empty rhetoric -- especially during an election year.



Speaking of empty rhetoric, I'm reminded of another story that I would like to end with -- because it strikes a lighter, more positive note.

There was a time when Senator Chauncey Depew was seated next to President William Howard Taft at a dinner. Both were wits in their own right. And when you get two wits like them together, you can expect a few sparks to fly.

Now President Taft had a rather large girth. Senator Depew -- upon noticing the President's ample stomach -- couldn't resist a good-natured wisecrack. "I hope if it's a girl Mr. Taft will name it for his charming wife."

Taft didn't miss a beat. "If it's a girl," he said, "I shall of course name it for my lovely helpmate of many years. And if it's a boy, I shall claim the father's prerogative and name it Junior. But if, as I suspect, it is only a bag of wind, I shall name it Chauncey Depew."

Thank you very much.

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