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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE 2002 NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY

The East Room

1:40 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you very much, John. This nation has got some big challenges ahead of her. One big challenge, of course, is to defend freedom, is to remain united as we fight for the very values that we hold so dear.

And another big challenge is to battle drug use. Drugs undermine the health of our citizens; they destroy the souls of our children. And the drug trade supports terrorist networks. When people purchase drugs, they put money in the hands of those who want to hurt America, hurt our allies. Drugs attack everything that is the best about this country, and I intend to do something about them.

Today, I'm proud to announce a national drug control strategy. It is a plan that will lay out a comprehensive strategy for our nation. We're putting the fight against drugs in the center of our national agenda. And I'm grateful for all of you who are here.

I want to thank John and those who work with him for taking on this enormous task. I also want to thank members of the United States Congress who are here: Senators Graham and Hatch, thank you both for coming today. I appreciate Elijah Cummings and Ernest Istook from Oklahoma; and Sander Levin from Michigan; John Mica, Florida; Rob Portman of Ohio; and Chairman Sensenbrenner from Wisconsin; Mark Souder from Indiana. Thank you all for coming. Your presence here shows our mutual commitment to put policy in place that will make a huge difference in the lives of many, many of our citizens.

I'm also so grateful for Admiral Loy for being here, of the United States Coast Guard. I had the honor of traveling to Maine recently to announce a significant initiative for the Coast Guard, a strong commitment by our administration to boost spending to make sure the Coast Guard is modern and capable of not only defending our borders, but actively being engaged in the fight to interdict drugs that could be coming into our country overseas. Admiral Loy, I'm proud to have you here and I'm proud of your team.

I also want to thank many ambassadors who are here, ambassadors from our neighbors to the south, the ambassador to Russia. I'm so grateful that you all are here and willing to lend your nations' support in this great cause.

I also want to thank the citizens who are here. We've got a fabulous group of citizens from around the nation representing groups that are -- have made the decision to do something about drug use. We've got community groups and prevention groups and law enforcement groups and I want to thank you for coming. And I hope you go back and when you go home, thank the folks that are working with you on behalf of a grateful nation.

We've got a problem in this country. Too many people use drugs, and this is an individual tragedy. And, as a result, it's a social crisis. There is no question that drug use wreaks havoc on the very fabric that provides stability for our society. Drug use wreaks havoc on our families. Drug use destroys people's ambitions and hopes.

More than 50 percent of our high school seniors have said that they've experimented with illegal drugs at least once prior to graduation. There's some new, "hip" drugs, like ecstasy and GHB. They're kind of fads. But they're dangerous and lethal, and they're taking too many lives.

And we know the results. We know what can happen. The important bond between parents and children are fractured and broken, sometimes forever. Schools can turn into places of violence and chaos, as opposed to places of learning and hope. Productive citizens can become so dependent, so addicted, that they live a life of hopelessness. We've got to do something about it here in America.

Drugs constitute a huge challenge to the very health of our nation. Illegal drugs cost our health care system almost \$15 billion a year. And illegal drugs are directly implicated in the deaths of almost 20,000 Americans a year. Drug use causes people to commit crime, making neighborhoods less safe and less secure for our families. Drugs help supply the deadly work of terrorists. That's so important for people in our country to understand.

You know, I'm asked all the time, how can I help fight against terror? What can I do, what can I as a citizen do to defend America? Well, one thing you can do is not purchase illegal drugs. Make no mistake about it, if you're buying illegal drugs in America, it is likely that money is going to end up in the hands of terrorist organizations. Just think about the Taliban in Afghanistan -- 70 percent of the world's opium trade came from Afghanistan, resulting in significant income to the Taliban, significant amount of money to the people that were harboring and feeding and hiding those who attacked and killed

thousands of innocent Americans on September the 11th. When we fight drugs, we fight the war on terror.

Today, I'm pleased to announce a new strategy to combat drugs in America. We're determined to limit drug supply, to reduce demand and to provide addicts with effective and compassionate drug treatment. Each of these steps is essential, and they're inseparable. And these steps must be funded, which is why the budget I submitted to Congress calls for \$19 billion to fight drug use.

We'll fight drug supply to reduce drug use, and punish those who deal in death. More than 280 metric tons of cocaine and 13 metric tons of heroin enter our country each year. To stop drugs from reaching our borders, the budget I've submitted includes nearly \$2.3 billion dollars for drug interdiction -- an increase of over 10 percent from last year's budget. With the Coast Guard's help, and with our partners in other nations, with the collaborative efforts with the leaders of all the nations in our neighborhood, we're going to fight drug traffickers, whether they try to bring the drugs in this country by sea, by land or by air.

I also want to target the supply of illegal drugs that are the source, particularly those in the Andean nations. That's why I've requested \$731 million for the Andean Counter-Drug initiative, the countries of Bolivia and Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. And I look forward to making sure the program is effective, that crop substitution works and crop destruction goes forward.

I look forward to working with your Presidents and telling them, point-blank, how anxious I am to make sure that our efforts to interdict supply is effective and meaningful and measurable and real.

I've also asked our Homeland Security Director, Tom Ridge, to examine ways we can improve our national border management system, to make sure we achieve what we want on our borders, which is commerce to move, but to stop the illegal flow of drugs. A more effective management of our border for homeland security will lead to better drug interdiction in our southern and northern borders.

However, it is important for Americans and American families to understand this: that the best way to affect supply is to reduce demand for drugs; that we can work as hard as we possibly want on interdiction, but so long as there is the demand for drug in this country, some crook is going to figure out how to get them here. And so a central focus of this strategy is to reduce demand; is to convince our children that the use of drugs is destructive in their lives. And that starts with good parenting. It is essential that our parents understand that they're the child's most important teacher, and that the message of our parents must be unequivocal: don't use drugs.

And so one of the things we're going to work hard to do is to fire up the Parents Drug Corps, is to fund an initiative that will convince and rally parents to do their job. I say that if we want to usher in a period of personal responsibility, if we want a new culture that changes from if-it-feels-good-do-it, to one that says we're responsible for our decisions, it begins with moms and dads being responsible parents, by telling their children they love them on a daily basis. And if you love somebody, you'll also tell them not to use drugs.

We know that community involvement can help defeat demand. Congressman Portman and Congressman Levin know that firsthand. They have been involved in their communities to rally interests and concerned citizens to come with a local grass-roots effort, all aimed at educating kids, and all aimed at pulling community resources together to make a clear statement, a clear responsible statement, that drugs will destroy -- don't use them.

And so we support the drug free community support program, by \$10 million, to encourage these grass-roots efforts, kind of the bottom-up effort to reduce demand in America. The money will help coalitions -- the formation of coalitions, effective coalitions of business leaders and teachers and families and law enforcement. And, oh, the faith community, we must never forget the faith community in America. Our government must not fear the involvement of faith-based programs. As a matter of fact, we've got to welcome faith-based programs.

This initiative is coupled with a faith-based initiative, will help rally the armies of compassion, those citizens who love their neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves, to help send a clear message that we love you, we love you so much we're going to convince you not to use drugs in the future.

We also know that early drug education defeats demand, and so in my budget there are \$644 million on the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program. That is a significant commitment. We also want to make sure that it is effective, that the message that gets into the schools is one that sends this clear message: don't use drugs, no ands, ifs or buts. Don't use them. And we know the media can have a powerful effect. And so we've got a \$180 million on the national youth anti-drug media campaign, a series of messages which lay out the hazards of drug use. And so ours is a concerted effort to reduce demand. It's central to making sure we've got an effective strategy.

As demand goes down, so will supply. As we reduce demand in America, it will take the pressure off of our friends in the south. It will make it easier for our friends in Mexico to deal with the drug problem. It will make it easier for Colombia to be able to deal with the growers and the mobsters who tend to wreak havoc in your country. The two are linked, but the reduction in demand is central to an effective strategy.

And, finally, treatment. We must aggressively promote drug treatment. Because a nation that is tough on drugs must also be compassionate to those addicted to drugs. Today, there are 3.9 million drug users in America who need, but who did not receive, help. And we've got to do something about that. We've got to help.

We're, therefore, proposing \$3.8 billion for drug treatment and research. This is an increase in our budget of over 6 percent. We'll work with state governments to provide treatment where it is needed most, and the federal dollars will be distributed to states to support efforts that work -- not efforts that might sound good, but efforts that actually accomplish the objective of saving people's lives. This includes \$100-million increase in treatment spending as part of a plan to spend \$1.6 billion over the next five years.

Now, one of the things in our strategy that I hope you find interesting and is important is that we're actually going to start targeting treatment spending for those who are most vulnerable -- people like pregnant moms, the homeless, people with HIV/AIDS, and teenagers. So while we've asked for an increase in treatment, there will be some targeted people we're trying to help, to make sure that those get special attention and special help in our treatment programs.

I believe by moving aggressively, without hesitation or apology, in all three of these areas we can make an enormous difference in America. And progress must be measured. I told John when he signed on, I'm the kind of fellow that likes to say, what are the results? I like to know, actually, are we making a difference? And so here's our goal, here's the goal by which we'll be measured -- here's the goal which I'll be measured first, and then John will definitely be measured if I'm measured. (Laughter.)

I want to see a 10 percent reduction in teenage and adult drug use over the next two years, and a 25 percent reduction in drug use, nationally, over the next five years. Those are our goals.

We understand we can't do it alone here in Washington. And that's why our approach is a community-based approach. That's why we recognize the true strength of the country is our people. And we know there's thousands of parents, thousands of educators, thousands of community activists, law enforcement officials, all anxious to come together to achieve this national strategy.

I know they're ambitious goals, but when we meet them, our nation is going to be safer and more hopeful. You see, there is a moral reason for this fight. There is a moral reason to achieve this grand national objective, and it's this: drugs rob

men and women and children of their dignity and their character.
Illegal drugs are the enemies of ambition and hope.

Thank you for joining the fight. May God bless you all.
(Applause.)

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1:58 P.M. EST