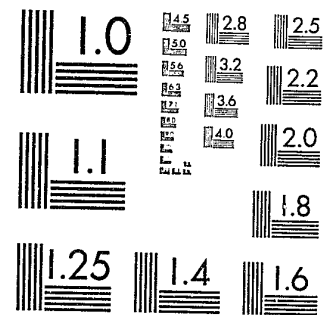


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National Institute of Justice
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8/3/83



Department of Justice

TESTIMONY

OF

JEFFREY HARRIS
DEPUTY ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BEFORE

THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

THE ADMINISTRATION'S ESTABLISHMENT OF
DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCES

ON

FEBRUARY 24, 1983

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to discuss with you the Administration's program for combatting organized drug trafficking.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, in recent years this nation has been plagued by an outbreak of crime unparalleled in our history and unequalled in any other free society. The perniciousness of crime in America has been fostered of late by two related developments. Crime has become increasingly organized. And organized crime has become especially lucrative because of the enormous market for illicit drugs. Drugs and organized crime have combined to wreak havoc in our communities and in our lives. The combination of drug trafficking and organized crime represents the most serious crime problem facing this country today. Directly or indirectly, it threatens each person and institution in this country.

Figures in a ledger book cannot describe accurately the real nature and effect of the drug problem. The real costs are in human lives and human suffering. To obtain money for drugs, criminals commit huge numbers of offenses. There is a massive toll of violent crimes against innocent victims and an enormous toll of serious property crimes. Half of all jail and prison inmates regularly used drugs before committing their offenses. Some studies have indicated that 50 to 60 percent of all property crimes are drug-related. Researchers found in a study of 243

addicts in one city that they had committed a total of 500,000 crimes over an 11-year period.

Crime now touches about one-third of all households in the United States every year.

The profiteers in this far-reaching pattern of human misery are the organizations in this nation which deal in drugs. The popular notion that the syndicate -- or traditional organized crime -- stays out of drugs is simply not true. Many of the syndicate's families have developed elaborate drug trafficking networks. Virtually every one of them is involved in drug trafficking in one way or another.

But the problem of organized crime today is by no means limited to its traditional form. In the past two decades, we have witnessed the emergence of new organized criminal enterprises dealing in drugs and the other rackets which traditionally had been controlled by the syndicate. These emerging groups have entered the drug business, often in competition with traditional organized crime.

Violence has become a way of life for the criminal organizations which deal in drugs. Judges, prosecutors, agents, witnesses and cooperating co-defendants have been threatened, assaulted and, in some instances, killed. Violence is the primary tactic of drug trafficking organizations and money is their common objective.

Equally serious, we see public officials at all levels being corrupted by drug money. We have reports of rural sheriffs and

police officers accepting payments of \$50,000 or more just to "look the other way" while traffickers make a single landing at a makeshift airport. The dollar amounts involved are so great that bribery threatens the very foundation of law and law enforcement.

The proceeds from drug sales also enable organized crime to carry out an array of other serious crimes, including the infiltration of legitimate business firms, money laundering and bank fraud which weaken key parts of the economy.

In a real sense, all of us have been touched in some way by the adverse effects of drug trafficking and drug abuse in the United States.

During the last two years we have recognized the full dimensions of the threat posed by organized crime and its involvement in drug trafficking. This Administration implemented a series of initiatives to make more efficient use of our limited resources in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime.

Early in this Administration, Attorney General William French Smith directed every United States Attorney to establish a Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee to assess the differing crime problems in each district throughout the Nation -- and to bring to bear a coordinated federal, state, and local effort against the kinds of crime that are of greatest concern in each federal district. Despite local variations, every Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee -- except one -- has identified drugs as the chief crime problem in its district.

We have reorganized the Drug Enforcement Administration and, for the first time, have brought the FBI into the fight against the number one crime problem to complement the excellent work of the DEA. We have gained not only the FBI's resources, but also its many years of experience in fighting organized crime. In January of 1982, the FBI had less than 100 significant drug investigations underway. In January of 1983, the FBI had 1,115 -- nearly twelve times as many -- and about one-third are joint investigations with DEA.

Indeed, the FBI and DEA under Judge Webster and Acting Administrator Bud Mullen have scored dramatic successes against organized crime. Working with the Justice Department's Organized Crime Strike Forces, the Bureau has helped to indict and convict numerous high-level members of syndicate families -- including the top structure of organized crime families in some cities.

As you recall, the Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime assessed the crime problem in this country and presented 64 recommendations to improve our federal effort. Approximately seventy-five percent of those recommendations have been implemented.

Additionally, the Department successfully sought Congressional enactment of an amendment to the posse comitatus law, so that we may now make appropriate use of military resources -- particularly tracking and intelligence capabilities -- in the fight against drug traffickers. Through amendments to the Tax Reform Act, crucial information is more readily available to law

enforcement -- and more tax cases are possible against drug dealers and organized criminals.

When this Administration took office, South Florida had become a focal point of drug-related violence and corruption. At the direction of the President, and under the auspices of Vice President Bush, personnel from the Departments of Justice, Treasury, Transportation and Defense have mounted a coordinated attack on drug smuggling and trafficking in South Florida. Our efforts in South Florida have achieved notable successes by slowing the flow of illegal drugs into South Florida and by galvanizing the community to a new degree of optimism about the drug problem.

To accomplish our initiatives in South Florida, however, law enforcement resources were shifted from other areas of the country -- and drug traffickers began to shift their routes toward those areas. Clearly, a national approach was needed. Many months ago, this Administration began drafting the initiatives to address the need for a national effort against drug trafficking -- an effort that incorporates new law enforcement resources, and recognizes the role of organized crime.

On October 14, the President and Attorney General Smith announced a comprehensive Eight Point Program that, in President Reagan's words, will "expose, prosecute and ultimately cripple organized crime in America." I want to discuss the central component to this important initiative with you today, and address

where we are in the establishment of the Task Forces in 12 areas around the nation which will attack international and domestic drug trafficking and other organized criminal activity.

In December, the Congress appropriated \$127.5 million for the Task Force Program for the remainder of this fiscal year. It was a prompt and far-reaching decision in the public interest, and all of us in law enforcement are grateful.

Improving upon our experience with the South Florida Task Force, and recognizing the increasing organized crime involvement in drug trafficking, we have established 12 additional task forces in key areas in the United States. These Task Forces, under the direction of the Attorney General, will work closely with state and local law enforcement officials. Following the South Florida example, they will utilize the law enforcement resources of the Federal Government including the FBI, DEA, IRS, ATF, Immigration and Naturalization Service, the United States Marshals Service, the United States Customs Service and the Coast Guard. In addition, in some regions, Department of Defense tracking and pursuit capability will be made available.

These task forces will allow us to mount an intensive and coordinated campaign against international and domestic drug trafficking and other organized criminal enterprises. Thus, refining the South Florida model, they will target and pursue the organized criminal enterprises trafficking in drugs.

Several points emphasize the significance of these new Task Forces in the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking. Our program provides the first major infusion of new agents into the FBI and DEA in about a decade. It means about a twenty-five percent increase in the number of agents devoted to drug work. The new Task Forces will complement the work of the Department's existing Organized Crime Strike Forces. Unlike prior federal drug efforts that focused on street level violators, our Task Forces will concentrate on destroying the top levels of organized drug trafficking. These Task Forces are a major new undertaking -- and they have the resources to match the significance of the undertaking.

The network of Task Forces cover the entire country. The areas covered by each Regional Task Force are as follows:

New England Region: Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Western and Northern Districts of New York. Headquarters: Boston.

New York-New Jersey Region: Southern and Eastern Districts of New York, New Jersey. Headquarters: New York City.

Mid-Atlantic Region: Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., Delaware, Eastern and Middle Districts of Pennsylvania. Headquarters: Baltimore.

Southeast Region: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Middle and Eastern Districts of Tennessee. Headquarters: Atlanta.

Gulf Coast Region: Texas, Louisiana, Southern District of Mississippi. Headquarters: Houston.

South Central Region: Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Western District of Kentucky, Western District of Tennessee, Northern District of Mississippi, and part of Illinois. Headquarters: St. Louis.

North Central Region: Indiana, most of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota. Headquarters: Chicago.

Great Lakes Region: Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Western District of Pennsylvania, Eastern District of Kentucky. Headquarters: Detroit.

Mountain States Region: Colorado, Utah, Nebraska, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Montana. Headquarters: Denver.

Los Angeles-Nevada Region: Nevada and Central District of California. Headquarters: Los Angeles.

Northwest Region: Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Alaska, Northern and Central Districts of California. Headquarters: San Francisco.

Southwest Border Region: Arizona, New Mexico, Southern District of California. Headquarters: San Diego.

The South Florida Task Force will continue in existence and will cover Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

On January 20, the Attorney General issued the Guidelines for The Drug Enforcement Task Forces. The Guidelines were developed jointly by all of the agencies involved in the Task Forces, and they represent a high-water mark for federal law enforcement

cooperation. A copy of the Guidelines is attached to my statement.

Significantly, the organization of the Task Forces is now in place. Personnel have been assigned. The Task Forces are becoming operational, and the program is on schedule.

Our initial personnel allocations for the headquarters cities have been completed. In addition, initial agent and prosecutor allocations have been completed in a second city in each region. We plan to phase agents and prosecutors into the program during late winter and the spring, and we will be at full strength by the end of summer.

The agents and prosecutors being assigned are experienced individuals. The vacancies those assignments create will be filled by newly-recruited personnel -- and many of them already have been selected and are in training.

One of the program's important aspects is that it is case-oriented -- with no bureaucratic excess. In the Department in Washington, we will have a program coordinator with a staff of only three or four persons. In each region, there is an Assistant U.S. Attorney Task Force coordinator with a staff of only two or three.

There will be close, careful monitoring of the Task force effort by the Department and the participating agencies. The Guidelines the Attorney General approved will aid that process and ensure its integrity.

Case assignments also are proceeding on schedule. Two major drug investigations have been selected for the headquarters city in each of the 12 Task Force areas. In addition, one major case has been selected in a second city in each region. Each of these cases is currently being investigated. To date, approximately thirty-five percent of the Task Force resources have been allocated to those cities and cases.

Let me stress that all of these cases are what our investigative agencies define as high-quality cases -- those involving major trafficking by major organized crime groups.

The Task Forces will enhance existing federal enforcement efforts against drugs and organized crime. The 12 new Task Forces are supplementing the FBI, DEA, Customs, and U.S. Attorney efforts directed against organized criminal groups dealing in drugs. The work of the Organized Crime Strike Forces and the South Florida Task Force will continue. We anticipate that the Task Forces will have close working relationships with state and local enforcement agencies.

In performing their functions, these Task Forces will be provided computers and automated data processing equipment, sophisticated communications capability, aircraft, and equipment for court-approved electronic surveillance.

Congress will be asked to provide regular budgets for the Task Forces following the first year of their operation.

While we expect that the Task Forces will play a principal role in the national domestic law enforcement effort against organized drug trafficking, we are also concentrating on the international aspects of this problem. We have expanded our investigative and prosecution efforts to trace drug-related financial transactions into the banking institutions of the off-shore tax havens. We continue our efforts to encourage source countries to embark on programs of crop control. Finally, we have taken the initiative to modernize our treaties to enable the extradition of defendants located in foreign countries and to obtain evidence from abroad which will be admissible in our courts here in the United States.

The Department of Justice will hold conferences for prosecutors from the Task Forces and other elements of the Department, early in 1983, to focus on issues which arise in connection with obtaining evidence from foreign jurisdictions, and also on the complexities of the prosecution of major drug trafficking organizations. Particular emphasis will be given to the use of civil and criminal forfeiture provisions of the drug and racketeering statutes, and the use of the civil and criminal provisions of the tax laws of the United States.

No crime problem is more important than drug trafficking and drug abuse; no problem is more challenging to law enforcement at every level -- federal, state and local. I am confident that the implementation of the initiatives I have discussed today will

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have a significant impact on the problem. I want to acknowledge the continuing support of this Subcommittee and thank each of you for your interest in our endeavors. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

END