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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Drug abuse is a tragic national problem which saps our Nation's vitality. It is also a major contributor to our growing crime rate. All of us must redouble our efforts to combat this problem.

Earlier this week I met with Representative Charles B. Rangel and other members of the Congress to discuss the problem of drug abuse. The Congressmen reported the growing availability and use of illicit drugs and expressed their concern about the continuing flow of drugs across the Southwest border from Mexico and their continuing concern about a possible resurgence of heroin traffic from Turkey.

Aware of the worsening situation, last spring I directed a high-priority review of the entire Federal effort in drug law enforcement, treatment and prevention, and international control. The resulting White Paper on Drug Abuse contained a frank assessment of where we are in these efforts, as well as a number of comprehensive recommendations to improve our response to this critical problem. I endorse the White Paper and the budget I will submit in January will request sufficient funds to implement all of its major recommendations.

This Administration already has begun to take strong action to deal with the mounting threat, however. I have spoken with Presidents Echeverria of Mexico and Lopez-Michelsen of Colombia and with Prime Minister Demeril of Turkey in an effort to strengthen cooperation of other nations involved in the fight against illicit drug traffic. Because of my particular concern about the problem of Mexican heroin, I am directing Secretary of State Kissinger to express to the Mexican government my personal concern that we explore opportunities for improved control. I have also directed the Domestic Council Drug Abuse Task Force to present me with specific recommendations for improving our ability to control drug trafficking along the Southwest border.

I call upon the Congress to enact my proposal for mandatory minimum sentences for drug traffickers, so those who are spreading this evil throughout our communities will be put behind bars where they belong. And I urge the Congress to ratify the Convention of Psycotropic Substances, so we can fulfill our obligations to the other nations of the world to see that strong international controls exist for all drugs. In the weeks ahead I will send to the Congress a comprehensive message on drug abuse establishing a framework for a broad government response to the problem.

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