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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Drug abuse is one of the most serious and tragic problems in this country. Its cost to the nation in terms of ruined lives, broken homes and divided communities is staggering. In addition to this toll, it is a major cause of crime.

Combatting this problem is a major priority of my Administration.

The appointment of Peter Bensinger as head of the Drug Enforcement Administration is one of the most important I have made as President, because of the critical mission of that agency. I believe we have found in Mr. Bensinger the right combination of proven experience, complete integrity and full commitment to public service.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is the agency principally responsible for Federal drug law enforcement. It has the often thankless task of seeking out and apprehending some of the cruelest criminals in the world -- those who traffic in hard drugs. This is a complex and difficult task. However, if we are to win the war on drugs, these merchants of tragedy and death must be stopped.

I have recommended that the Congress enact legislation which would impose mandatory prison sentences on those convicted of trafficking in hard drugs. I have also met with the leaders of Mexico, Turkey and Colombia, and with members of the United States Congress, to assure them of my full commitment to curbing the illicit traffic in drugs. I want to take this opportunity to pledge to the American people an all-out Federal effort to combat the drug menace.

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