

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL 10:00 a.m. (EDT)

April 27, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON DRUG ABUSE

In transmitting his special Message on Drug Abuse to the Congress today, the President stated that he would propose legislation to strengthen the criminal justice system's ability to deal with arrested traffickers. Also, he announced that he is taking several Executive actions to strengthen the overall management of the drug program, and he called for intensified diplomatic initiatives to strengthen international narcotic controls.

BACKGROUND

Counting narcotic-related crime, addicts' lost productivity, criminal justice system costs, and direct treatment and prevention program spending, estimates of the direct cost of drug abuse to the Nation range from \$10 billion to \$17 billion a year. More than 5,000 American citizens die of drug-related causes each year, with most of these deaths concentrated among the young adult population. Also, law enforcement officials estimate that up to one-half of all robberies, muggings, burglaries, and other forms of property crimes are committed by addicts to support their expensive and debilitating habits.

Over the past half decade, total Federal expenditures have grown from less than \$100 million to over three quarters of a billion dollars per year for a comprehensive program of prevention and treatment, law enforcement, and international control. The result was that between late 1972 and early 1974, drug abuse indicators which had been going up steadily for years had turned down, and the increase in property crime seemed to have been broken.

By early 1975, it was clear that conditions were again worsening and that gains of previous years were being eroded. For example, "street" availability of heroin measured by price and purity was increasing. Waiting lists for treatment existed again, after having almost disappeared. Drug-related deaths and drug-related cases in hospital emergency rooms were increasing. Drug-related crimes were on the upsurge. Cities which only two years before had reported a decline in heroin use, began reporting an increase, and some smaller communities which never before had a drug problem began experiencing significant use of heroin and other dangerous drugs.

Last April, President Ford directed a comprehensive review of the entire Federal effort in drug law enforcement, treatment and prevention, and international control. He asked for an assessment of the extent of the problem and for recommendations to make the Federal program more effective.

more

The President has endorsed the resulting White Paper on Drug Abuse (see supplement A for summary of White Paper), and the budget he submitted for FY 1977 requests funds to implement all of its principal recommendations (see supplement B for description of FY 1977 drug abuse control budget).

The message which the President is sending to the Congress today builds on the White Paper, spells out a number of specific steps the President is taking to strengthen the overall drug program, and calls on the Congress to act in several areas.

I. STRENGTHENING LAWS

Substantial progress has been made in improving the ability of Federal law enforcement agencies to apprehend major drug traffickers; for example, the number of major traffickers arrested in the last six months of 1975 was up sharply over prior periods.

However, this progress in arresting major traffickers may be largely dissipated unless major changes are made in the way the criminal justice system handles them after arrest. For example, a recent Justice Department study revealed that one out of every four persons convicted of trafficking in heroin received no prison sentence at all; one in three received a sentence of less than three years. In another example, a 1974 Justice Department study showed that nearly one out of two of a sample of individuals arrested for trafficking in narcotics were implicated in post-arrest drug trafficking while out on bail.

To remedy this situation, the President will shortly submit legislation to the Congress which will:

- Require minimum mandatory prison sentences for persons convicted of high-level trafficking in heroin and similar narcotic drugs;
- Enable judges to deny bail in the absence of compelling circumstances if a defendant arrested for trafficking heroin or dangerous drugs is found (1) to have previously been convicted of a drug felony; (2) to be presently free on parole; (3) to be a non-resident alien; (4) to have been arrested in possession of a false passport; or (5) to be a fugitive or previously convicted of being a fugitive;
- Raise the value of property used to smuggle drugs which can be seized by administrative, as opposed to judicial, action (from \$2,500 to \$10,000);
- Extend the above forfeiture provision to include cash or other personal property found in the possession of a narcotics violator if the property is determined to have been used (or be intended for use) in connection with an illegal drug transaction;
- Require masters of boats -- including pleasure vessels -- arriving in the United States to report immediately to Customs upon arrival, rather than within 24 hours as is now required; and

more

- Expand Customs' authority to search for cash and other monetary instruments being smuggled out of the country.

II. IMPROVING PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The Federal program to control drug abuse involves seven Cabinet departments and seventeen agencies. The President has taken a number of actions to integrate the efforts of these departments and agencies into an effective overall program, while at the same time ensuring that program management be lodged with the departments and agencies having direct program responsibility. The President has also taken several actions intended to more fully utilize all the resources available throughout the Federal Government.

- Two new Cabinet committees are being established to provide direction for, and coordination of, Federal drug programs and activities. The Cabinet Committee for Drug Law Enforcement will be chaired by the Attorney General, and will include the Secretaries of Treasury and Transportation. The Cabinet Committee for Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be chaired by the Secretary of HEW, and will include the Secretaries of Defense and Labor, and the Administrator of the Veterans' Administration;
- The Secretary of HEW and the Attorney General have been directed to develop plans to improve coordination between the treatment and criminal justice system, so drug users in the criminal justice system are identified and provided with treatment and rehabilitation services;
- The new Cabinet Committee on Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation has been directed to give high priority to identifying specific ways to improve job opportunities for former addicts;
- The Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, have been directed to develop a tax enforcement program aimed at major drug traffickers.

III. ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Since many of the most seriously abused drugs originate in foreign countries, our capability to deal with supplies of drugs available in the United States is to a large degree reliant upon the interest and capability of foreign governments to control the production and shipment of illicit drugs.

In his drug message, the President:

- Reaffirms the Administration's commitment to intensifying diplomatic efforts at all levels in order to encourage the greatest possible commitment from other governments to this mutual problem, and to continuing to provide technical and equipment assistance, formal training of foreign enforcement officials, and assistance through cooperative enforcement efforts with U.S. agents stationed overseas;
- Directs the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Ambassador to the United Nations to expand their discussions of drug control with foreign leaders;

more

- Endorses the proposal of Mexican President Echeverria to establish a mechanism for formally exchanging information and ideas between high-level coordinating bodies; assigns responsibility for liaison with the Mexican Commission to the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotic Control; and directs the Chairman of the CCINC to immediately form an Executive Committee to meet with its Mexican counterpart to discuss ways in which our Government can collaborate more effectively with Mexico;
- Urges the Congress to expedite approval of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, an international treaty which would provide a system for the control of synthetic drugs similar to that which exists for narcotic drugs.

#