

[Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control.](#)

June 17, 1971

Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control.," June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project.

To the Congress of the United States:

In New York City more people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five years die as a result of narcotics than from any other single cause.

In 1960, less than 200 narcotic deaths were recorded in New York City. In 1970, the figure had risen to over 1,000. These statistics do not reflect a problem indigenous to New York City.

Although New York is the one major city in the Nation which has kept good statistics on drug addiction, the problem is national and international. We are moving to deal with it on both levels. As part of this administration's ongoing efforts to stem the tide of drug abuse which has swept America in the last decade, we submitted legislation in July of 1969 for a comprehensive reform of Federal drug enforcement laws. Fifteen months later, in October, 1970, the Congress passed this vitally-needed legislation, and it is now producing excellent results. Nevertheless, in the fifteen months between the submission of that legislation and its passage, much valuable time was lost.

We must now candidly recognize that the deliberate procedures embodied in present efforts to control drug abuse are not sufficient in themselves. The problem has assumed the dimensions of a national emergency. I intend to take every step necessary to deal with this emergency, including asking the Congress for an amendment to my 1972 budget to provide an additional \$155 million to carry out these steps. This will provide a total of \$371 million for programs to control drug abuse in America.

A NEW APPROACH TO REHABILITATION

While experience thus far indicates that the enforcement provisions of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 are effective, they are not sufficient in themselves to eliminate drug abuse. Enforcement must be coupled with a rational approach to the reclamation of the drug user himself. The laws of supply and demand function in the illegal drug business as in any other. We are taking steps under the Comprehensive Drug Act to deal with the supply side of the equation and I am recommending additional steps to be taken now. But we must also deal with demand. We must rehabilitate the drug user if we are to eliminate drug abuse and all the antisocial activities that flow from drug abuse.

Narcotic addiction is a major contributor to crime. The cost of supplying a narcotic habit can run from \$30 a day to \$100 a day. This is \$210 to \$700 a week, or \$10,000 a year to over \$36,000 a year. Untreated narcotic addicts do not ordinarily hold jobs. Instead, they often turn to shoplifting, mugging, burglary, armed robbery, and so on. They also support themselves by starting other people--young people--on drugs. The financial costs of addiction are more than \$2 billion every year, but these costs can at least be measured. The human costs cannot. American society should not be required to bear either cost.

Despite the fact that drug addiction destroys lives, destroys families, and destroys communities, we are still not moving fast enough to meet the problem in an effective way. Our efforts are strained through the Federal bureaucracy. Of those we can reach at all under the present Federal system--and the number is relatively small--of those we try to help and who want help, we cure only a tragically small percentage.

Despite the magnitude of the problem, despite our very limited success in meeting it, and despite the common recognition of both circumstances, we nevertheless have thus far failed to develop a concerted effort to find a better solution to this increasingly grave threat. At present, there are nine Federal agencies involved in one fashion or another with the problem of drug addiction. There are anti-drug abuse efforts in Federal programs ranging from vocational rehabilitation to highway safety. In this manner our efforts have been fragmented through competing priorities, lack of communication, multiple authority, and limited and dispersed resources. The magnitude and the severity of the present threat will no longer permit this piecemeal and bureaucratically-dispersed effort at drug control. If we cannot destroy the drug menace in America, then it will surely in time destroy us. I am not prepared to accept this alternative.

Therefore, I am transmitting legislation to the Congress to consolidate at the highest level a full-scale attack on the problem of drug abuse in America. I am proposing the appropriation of additional funds to meet the cost of rehabilitating drug users, and I will ask for additional funds to increase our enforcement efforts to further tighten the noose around the necks of drug peddlers, and thereby loosen the noose around the necks of drug users.

At the same time I am proposing additional steps to strike at the "supply" side of the drug equation--to halt the drug traffic by striking at the illegal producers of drugs, the growing of those plants from which drugs are derived, and trafficking in these drugs beyond our borders.

America has the largest number of heroin addicts of any nation in the world. And yet, America does not grow opium--of which heroin is a derivative--nor does it manufacture heroin, which is a laboratory process carried out abroad. This deadly poison in the American life stream is, in other words, a foreign import. In the last year, heroin seizures by Federal agencies surpassed the total seized in the previous ten years. Nevertheless, it is estimated that we are stopping less than 20 percent of the drugs aimed at this Nation. No serious attack on our national drug problem can ignore the international implications of such an effort, nor can the domestic effort succeed without attacking the problem on an international plane. I intend to do that.

A COORDINATED FEDERAL RESPONSE

Not very long ago, it was possible for Americans to persuade themselves, with some justification, that narcotic addiction was a class problem. Whether or not this was an accurate picture is irrelevant today, because now the problem is universal. But despite the increasing dimensions of the problem, and despite increasing consciousness of the problem, we have made little headway in understanding what is involved in drug abuse or how to deal with it. The very nature of the drug abuse problem has meant that its extent and seriousness have been shrouded in secrecy, not only by the criminal elements who profit from drug use, but by the drug users themselves--the people whom society is attempting to reach and help. This fact has added immeasurably to the difficulties of medical assistance, rehabilitation, and government

action to counter drug abuse, and to find basic and permanent methods to stop it. Even now, there are no precise national statistics as to the number of drug-dependent citizens in the United States, the rate at which drug abuse is increasing, or where and how this increase is taking place. Most of what we think we know is extrapolated from those few States and cities where the dimensions of the problem have forced closer attention, including the maintenance of statistics.

A large number of Federal Government agencies are involved in efforts to fight the drug problem either with new programs or by expanding existing programs. Many of these programs are still experimental in nature. This is appropriate. The problems of drug abuse must be faced on many fronts at the same time, and we do not yet know which efforts will be most successful. But we must recognize that piecemeal efforts, even where individually successful, cannot have a major impact on the drug abuse problem unless and until they are forged together into a broader and more integrated program involving all levels of government and private effort. We need a coordinated effort if we are to move effectively against drug abuse.

The magnitude of the problem, the national and international implications of the problem, and the limited capacities of States and cities to deal with the problem all reinforce the conclusion that coordination of this effort must take place at the highest levels of the Federal Government. Therefore, I propose the establishment of a central authority with overall responsibility for all major Federal drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, rehabilitation, training, and research programs in all Federal agencies. This authority would be known as the Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention. It would be located within the Executive Office of the President and would be headed by a Director accountable to the President. Because this is an emergency response to a national problem which we intend to bring under control, the Office would be established to operate only for a period of three years from its date of enactment, and the President would have the option of extending its life for an additional two years if desirable. This Office would provide strengthened Federal leadership in finding solutions to drug abuse problems. It would establish priorities and instill a sense of urgency in Federal and federally-supported drug abuse programs, and it would increase coordination between Federal, State, and local rehabilitation efforts.

More specifically, the Special Action Office would develop overall Federal strategy for drug abuse prevention programs, set program goals, objectives and priorities, carry out programs through other Federal agencies, develop guidance and standards for operating agencies, and evaluate performance of all programs to determine where success is being achieved. It would extend its efforts into research, prevention, training, education, treatment, rehabilitation, and the development of necessary reports, statistics, and social indicators for use by all public and private groups. It would not be directly concerned with the problems of reducing drug supply, or with the law enforcement aspects of drug abuse control.

It would concentrate on the "demand" side of the drug equation--the use and the user of drugs. The program authority of the Director would be exercised through working agreements with other Federal agencies. In this fashion, full advantage would be taken of the skills and resources these agencies can bring to bear on solving drug abuse problems by linking them with a highly goal-oriented authority capable of functioning across departmental lines. By eliminating bureaucratic red tape, and jurisdictional disputes between agencies, the Special

Action Office would do what cannot be done presently: it would mount a wholly coordinated national attack on a national problem. It would use all available resources of the Federal Government to identify the problems precisely, and it would allocate resources to attack those problems. In practice, implementing departments and agencies would be bound to meet specific terms and standards for performance. These terms and standards would be set forth under inter-agency agreement through a Program Plan defining objectives, costs, schedule, performance requirements, technical limits, and other factors essential to program success. With the authority of the Program Plan, the Director of the Special Action Office could demand performance instead of hoping for it. Agencies would receive money based on performance and their retention of funding and program authority would depend upon periodic appraisal of their performance.

In order to meet the need for realistic central program appraisal, the Office would develop special program monitoring and evaluation capabilities so that it could realistically determine which activities and techniques were producing results. This evaluation would be tied to the planning process so that knowledge about success/failure results could guide the selection of future plans and priorities.

In addition to the inter-agency agreement and Program Plan approach described above, the Office would have direct authority to let grants or make contracts with industrial, commercial, or nonprofit organizations. This authority would be used in specific instances where there is no appropriate Federal agency prepared to undertake a program, or where for some other reason it would be faster, cheaper, or more effective to grant or contract directly.

Within the broad mission of the Special Action Office, the Director would set specific objectives for accomplishment during the first three years of Office activity. These objectives would target such areas as reduction in the overall national rate of drug addiction, reduction in drug-related deaths, reduction of drug use in schools, impact on the number of men rejected for military duty because of drug abuse, and so forth. A primary objective of the Office would be the development of a reliable set of social indicators which accurately show the nature, extent, and trends in the drug abuse problem.

These specific targets for accomplishment would act to focus the efforts of the drug abuse prevention program, not on intermediate achievements such as numbers of treatments given or educational programs conducted, but rather on ultimate "payoff" accomplishments in the reduction of the human and social costs of drug abuse. Our programs cannot be judged on the fulfillment of quotas and other bureaucratic indexes of accomplishment. They must be judged by the number of human beings who are brought out of the hell of addiction, and by the number of human beings who are dissuaded from entering that hell.

I urge the Congress to give this proposal the highest priority, and I trust it will do so.

Nevertheless, due to the need for immediate action, I am issuing today, June 17, an [Executive Order \[11599\]](#) establishing within the Executive Office of the President a Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention. Until the Congress passes the legislation giving full authority to this Office, a Special Consultant to the President for Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs will institute to the extent legally possible the functions of the Special Action Office.

REHABILITATION: A NEW PRIORITY

When traffic in narcotics is no longer profitable, then that traffic will cease. Increased enforcement and vigorous application of the fullest penalties provided by law are two of the steps in rendering narcotics trade unprofitable. But as long as there is a demand, there will be those willing to take the risks of meeting the demand. So we must also act to destroy the market for drugs, and this means the prevention of new addicts, and the rehabilitation of those who are addicted.

To do this, I am asking the Congress for a total of \$105 million in addition to funds already contained in my 1972 budget to be used solely for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-addicted individuals.

I will also ask the Congress to provide an additional \$10 million in funds to increase and improve education and training in the field of dangerous drugs. This will increase the money available for education and training to more than \$24 million. It has become fashionable to suppose that no drugs are as dangerous as they are commonly thought to be, and that the use of some drugs entails no risk at all. These are misconceptions, and every day we reap the tragic results of these misconceptions when young people are "turned on" to drugs believing that narcotics addiction is something that happens to other people. We need an expanded effort to show that addiction is all too often a one-way street beginning with "innocent" experimentation and ending in death. Between these extremes is the degradation that addiction inflicts on those who believed that it could not happen to them.

While by no means a major part of the American narcotics problem, an especially disheartening aspect of that problem involves those of our men in Vietnam who have used drugs. Peer pressures combine with easy availability to foster drug use. We are taking steps to end the availability of drugs in South Vietnam but, in addition, the nature of drug addiction, and the peculiar aspects of the present problem as it involves veterans, make it imperative that rehabilitation procedures be undertaken immediately. In Vietnam, for example, heroin is cheap and 95 percent pure, and its effects are commonly achieved through smoking or "snorting" the drug. In the United States, the drug is impure, consisting of only about 5 percent heroin, and it must be "mainlined" or injected into the bloodstream to achieve an effect comparable to that which may have been experienced in Vietnam. Further, a habit which costs \$5 a day to maintain in Vietnam can cost \$100 a day to maintain in the United States, and those who continue to use heroin slip into the twilight world of crime, bad drugs, and all too often a premature death.

In order to expedite the rehabilitation process of Vietnam veterans, I have ordered the immediate establishment of testing procedures and initial rehabilitation efforts to be taken in Vietnam. This procedure is under way and testing will commence in a matter of days. The Department of Defense will provide rehabilitation programs to all servicemen being returned for discharge who want this help, and we will be requesting legislation to permit the military services to retain for treatment any individual due for discharge who is a narcotic addict. All of our servicemen must be accorded the right to rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation procedures, which are required subsequent to discharge, will be effected under the aegis of the Director of the Special Action Office who will have the authority to refer patients to private hospitals as well as VA hospitals as circumstances require.

The Veterans Administration medical facilities are a great national resource which can be of immeasurable assistance in the effort against this grave national problem. Restrictive and

exclusionary use of these facilities under present statutes means that we are wasting a critically needed national resource. We are commonly closing the doors to those who need help the most. This is a luxury we cannot afford. Authority will be sought by the new Office to make the facilities of the Veterans Administration available to all former servicemen in need of drug rehabilitation, regardless of the nature of their discharge from the service.

I am asking the Congress to increase the present budget of the Veterans Administration by \$14 million to permit the immediate initiation of this program. This money would be used to assist in the immediate development and emplacement of VA rehabilitation centers which will permit both inpatient and outpatient care of addicts in a community setting.

I am also asking that the Congress amend the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act of 1966 to broaden the authority under this Act for the use of methadone maintenance programs. These programs would be carried out under the most rigid standards and would be subjected to constant and painstaking reevaluation of their effectiveness. At this time, the evidence indicates that methadone is a useful tool in the work of rehabilitating heroin addicts, and that tool ought to be available to those who must do this work.

Finally, I will instruct the Special Consultant for Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to review immediately all Federal laws pertaining to rehabilitation and I will submit any legislation needed to expedite the Federal rehabilitative role, and to correct overlapping authorities and other shortcomings.

ADDITIONAL ENFORCEMENT NEEDS

The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 provides a sound base for the attack on the problem of the availability of narcotics in America. In addition to tighter and more enforceable regulatory controls, the measure provides law enforcement with stronger and better tools. Equally important, the Act contains credible and proper penalties against violators of the drug law. Severe punishments are invoked against the drug pushers and peddlers while more lenient and flexible sanctions are provided for the users. A seller can receive fifteen years for a first offense involving hard narcotics, thirty years if the sale is to a minor, and up to life in prison if the transaction is part of a continuing criminal enterprise.

These new penalties allow judges more discretion, which we feel will restore credibility to the drug control laws and eliminate some of the difficulties prosecutors and judges have had in the past arising out of minimum mandatory penalties for all violators.

The penalty structure in the 1970 Drug Act became effective on May 1 of this year. While it is too soon to assess its effect, I expect it to help enable us to deter or remove from our midst those who traffic in narcotics and other dangerous drugs.

To complement the new Federal drug law, a uniform State drug control law has been drafted and recommended to the States. Nineteen States have already adopted it and others have it under active consideration. Adoption of this uniform law will facilitate joint and effective action by all levels of government.

Although I do not presently anticipate a necessity for alteration of the purposes or principles of existing enforcement statutes, there is a clear need for some additional enforcement legislation. To help expedite the prosecution of narcotic trafficking cases, we are asking the Congress to provide legislation which would permit the United States Government to utilize information

obtained by foreign police, provided that such information was obtained in compliance with the laws of that country.

We are also asking that the Congress provide legislation which would permit a chemist to submit written findings of his analysis in drug cases. This would speed the process of criminal justice.

The problems of addict identification are equalled and surpassed by the problem of drug identification. To expedite work in this area of narcotics enforcement, I am asking the Congress to provide \$2 million to be allotted to the research and development of equipment and techniques for the detection of illegal drugs and drug traffic.

I am asking the Congress to provide \$2 million to the Department of Agriculture for research and development of herbicides which can be used to destroy growths of narcotics-producing plants without adverse ecological effects.

I am asking the Congress to authorize and fund 325 additional positions within the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to increase their capacity for apprehending those engaged in narcotics trafficking here and abroad and to investigate domestic industrial producers of drugs. Finally, I am asking the Congress to provide a supplemental appropriation of \$25.6 million for the Treasury Department. This will increase funds available to this Department for drug abuse control to nearly \$45 million. Of this sum, \$18.1 million would be used to enable the Bureau of Customs to develop the technical capacity to deal with smuggling by air and sea, to increase the investigative staff charged with pursuit and apprehension of smugglers, and to increase inspection personnel who search persons, baggage, and cargo entering the country. The remaining \$7.5 million would permit the Internal Revenue Service to intensify investigation of persons involved in large-scale narcotics trafficking.

These steps would strengthen our efforts to root out the cancerous growth of narcotics addiction in America. It is impossible to say that the enforcement legislation I have asked for here will be conclusive--that we will not need further legislation. We cannot fully know at this time what further steps will be necessary. As those steps define themselves, we will be prepared to seek further legislation to take any action and every action necessary to wipe out the menace of drug addiction in America. But domestic enforcement alone cannot do the job. If we are to stop the flow of narcotics into the lifeblood of this country, I believe we must stop it at the source.

INTERNATIONAL

There are several broad categories of drugs: those of the cannabis family-such as marihuana and hashish; those which are used as sedatives, such as the barbiturates and certain tranquilizers; those which elevate mood and suppress appetite, such as the amphetamines; and, drugs such as LSD and mescaline, which are commonly called hallucinogens. Finally, there are the narcotic analgesics, including opium and its derivatives-morphine and codeine. Heroin is made from morphine.

Heroin addiction is the most difficult to control and the most socially destructive form of addiction in America today. Heroin is a fact of life and a cause of death among an increasing number of citizens in America, and it is heroin addiction that must command priority in the struggle against drugs.

To wage an effective war against heroin addiction, we must have international cooperation. In order to secure such cooperation, I am initiating a worldwide escalation in our existing programs for the control of narcotics traffic, and I am proposing a number of new steps for this purpose. First, on Monday, June 14, I recalled the United States Ambassadors to Turkey, France, Mexico, Luxembourg, Thailand, the Republic of Vietnam, and the United Nations for consultations on how we can better cooperate with other nations in the effort to regulate the present substantial world opium output and narcotics trafficking. I sought to make it equally clear that I consider the heroin addiction of American citizens an international problem of grave concern to this Nation, and I instructed our Ambassadors to make this clear to their host governments. We want good relations with other countries, but we cannot buy good relations at the expense of temporizing on this problem.

Second, United States Ambassadors to all East Asian governments will meet in Bangkok, Thailand, tomorrow, June 18, to review the increasing problem in that area, with particular concern for the effects of this problem on American servicemen in Southeast Asia.

Third, it is clear that the only really effective way to end heroin production is to end opium production and the growing of poppies. I will propose that as an international goal. It is essential to recognize that opium is, at present, a legitimate source of income to many of those nations which produce it. Morphine and codeine both have legitimate medical applications.

It is the production of morphine and codeine for medical purposes which justifies the maintenance of opium production, and it is this production which in turn contributes to the world's heroin supply. The development of effective substitutes for these derivatives would eliminate any valid reason for opium production. While modern medicine has developed effective and broadly-used substitutes for morphine, it has yet to provide a fully acceptable substitute for codeine. Therefore, I am directing that Federal research efforts in the United States be intensified with the aim of developing at the earliest possible date synthetic substitutes for all opium derivatives. At the same time I am requesting the Director General of the World Health Organization to appoint a study panel of experts to make periodic technical assessments of any synthetics which might replace opiates with the aim of effecting substitutions as soon as possible.

Fourth, I am requesting \$1 million to be used by the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs for training of foreign narcotics enforcement officers. Additional personnel within the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs would permit the strengthening of the investigative capacities of BNDD offices in the U.S., as well as their ability to assist host governments in the hiring, training, and deployment of personnel and the procurement of necessary equipment for drug abuse control.

Fifth, I am asking the Congress to amend and approve the International Security Assistance Act of 1971 and the International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Act of 1971 to permit assistance to presently proscribed nations in their efforts to end drug trafficking. The drug problem crosses ideological boundaries and surmounts national differences. If we are barred in any way in our effort to deal with this matter, our efforts will be crippled, and our will subject to question. I intend to leave no room for other nations to question our commitment to this matter.

Sixth, we must recognize that cooperation in control of dangerous drugs works both ways. While the sources of our chief narcotics problem are foreign, the United States is a source of illegal

psychotropic drugs which afflict other nations. If we expect other governments to help stop the flow of heroin to our shores, we must act with equal vigor to prevent equally dangerous substances from going into their nations from our own. Accordingly, I am submitting to the Senate for its advice and consent the Convention on Psychotropic Substances which was recently signed by the United States and 22 other nations. In addition, I will submit to the Congress any legislation made necessary by the Convention including the complete licensing, inspection, and control of the manufacture, distribution, and trade in dangerous synthetic drugs. Seventh, the United States has already pledged \$2 million to a Special Fund created on April 1 of this year by the Secretary General of the United Nations and aimed at planning and executing a concerted UN effort against the world drug problem. We will continue our strong backing of UN drug-control efforts by encouraging other countries to contribute and by requesting the Congress to make additional contributions to this fund as their need is demonstrated. Finally, we have proposed, and we are strongly urging multilateral support for, amendments to the Single Convention on Narcotics which would enable the International Narcotics Control Board to:

- require from signatories details about opium poppy cultivation and opium production--thus permitting the Board access to essential information about narcotics raw materials from which illicit diversion occurs;

- base its decisions about the various nations' activities with narcotic drugs not only as at present on information officially submitted by the governments, but also on information which the Board obtains through public or private sources--thus enhancing data available to the Board in regard to illicit traffic;

- carry out, with the consent of the nation concerned, on-the-spot inquiries on drug related activities;

- modify signatories' annual estimates of intended poppy acreage and opium production with a view to reducing acreage or production; and

- in extreme cases, require signatories to embargo the export and/or import of drugs to or from a particular country that has failed to meet its obligations under the Convention.

I believe the foregoing proposals establish a new and needed dimension in the international effort to halt drug production, drug traffic, and drug abuse. These proposals put the problems and the search for solutions in proper perspective, and will give this Nation its best opportunity to end the flow of drugs, and most particularly heroin, into America, by literally cutting it off root and branch at the source.

CONCLUSION

Narcotics addiction is a problem which afflicts both the body and the soul of America. It is a problem which baffles many Americans. In our history we have faced great difficulties again and again, wars and depressions and divisions among our people have tested our will as a people--and we have prevailed.

We have fought together in war, we have worked together in hard times, and we have reached out to each other in division--to close the gaps between our people and keep America whole.

The threat of narcotics among our people is one which properly frightens many Americans. It comes quietly into homes and destroys children, it moves into neighborhoods and breaks the fiber of community which makes neighbors. It is a problem which demands compassion, and not

simply condemnation, for those who become the victims of narcotics and dangerous drugs. We must try to better understand the confusion and disillusion and despair that bring people, particularly young people, to the use of narcotics and dangerous drugs.

We are not without some understanding in this matter, however. And we are not without the will to deal with this matter. We have the moral resources to do the job. Now we need the authority and the funds to match our moral resources. I am confident that we will prevail in this struggle as we have in many others. But time is critical. Every day we lose compounds the tragedy which drugs inflict on individual Americans. The final issue is not whether we will conquer drug abuse, but how soon. Part of this answer lies with the Congress now and the speed with which it moves to support the struggle against drug abuse.

RICHARD NIXON

The White House

June 17, 1971

Note: The proposed drug abuse control legislation was S. 2097.

On the same day, the White House released a summary of highlights of Administration actions in the fields of drug abuse prevention and control and a fact sheet on the message.

Citation: Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control.," June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>.

Special Message to the Congress on Control of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

July 14, 1969

To the Congress of the United States:

Within the last decade, the abuse of drugs has grown from essentially a local police problem into a serious national threat to the personal health and safety of millions of Americans.

A national awareness of the gravity of the situation is needed; a new urgency and concerted national policy are needed at the Federal level to begin to cope with this growing menace to the general welfare of the United States.

Between the years 1960 and 1967, juvenile arrests involving the use of drugs rose by almost 800 percent; half of those now being arrested for the illicit use of narcotics are under 21 years of age. New York City alone has records of some 40,000 heroin addicts, and the number rises between 7000 and 9000 a year. These official statistics are only the tip of an iceberg whose dimensions we can only surmise.

The number of narcotics addicts across the United States is now estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. Another estimate is that several million American college students have at least experimented with marihuana, hashish, LSD, amphetamines, or barbiturates. It is doubtful that an American parent can send a son or daughter to college today without exposing

the young man or woman to drug abuse. Parents must also be concerned about the availability and use of such drugs in our high schools and junior high schools.

The habit of the narcotics addict is not only a danger to himself, but a threat to the community where he lives. Narcotics have been cited as a primary cause of the enormous increase in street crimes over the last decade.

As the addict's tolerance for drugs increases, his demand for drugs rises, and the cost of his habit grows. It can easily reach hundreds of dollars a day. Since an underworld "fence" will give him only a fraction of the value of goods he steals, an addict can be forced to commit two or three burglaries a day to maintain his habit. Street robberies, prostitution, even the enticing of others into addiction to drugs--an addict will reduce himself to any offense, any degradation in order to acquire the drugs he craves.

However far the addict himself may fall, his offenses against himself and society do not compare with the inhumanity of those who make a living exploiting the weakness and desperation of their fellow men. Society has few judgments too severe, few penalties too harsh for the men who make their livelihood in the narcotics traffic.

It has been a common oversimplification to consider narcotics addiction, or drug abuse, to be a law enforcement problem alone. Effective control of illicit drugs requires the cooperation of many agencies of the Federal and local and State governments; it is beyond the province of any one of them alone. At the Federal level, the burden of the national effort must be carried by the Departments of Justice, Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Treasury. I am proposing ten specific steps as this Administration's initial counter-moves against this growing national problem.

I. FEDERAL LEGISLATION

To more effectively meet the narcotic and dangerous drug problems at the Federal level, the Attorney General is forwarding to the Congress a comprehensive legislative proposal to control these drugs. This measure will place in a single statute, a revised and modern plan for control. Current laws in this field are inadequate and outdated.

I consider the legislative proposal a fair, rational and necessary approach to the total drug problem. It will tighten the regulatory controls and protect the public against illicit diversion of many of these drugs from legitimate channels. It will insure greater accountability and better record-keeping. It will give law enforcement stronger and better tools that are sorely needed so that those charged with enforcing these laws can do so more effectively. Further, this proposal creates a more flexible mechanism which will allow quicker control of new dangerous drugs before their misuse and abuse reach epidemic proportions. I urge the Congress to take favorable action on this bill.

In mid-May the Supreme Court struck down segments of the marihuana laws and called into question some of the basic foundations for the other existing drug statutes. I have also asked the Attorney General to submit an interim measure to correct the constitutional deficiencies of the Marihuana Tax Act as pointed out in the Supreme Court's recent decision. I urge Congress to act swiftly and favorably on the proposal to close the gap now existing in the Federal law and thereby give the Congress time to carefully examine the comprehensive drug control proposal.

II. STATE LEGISLATION

The Department of Justice is developing a model State Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Act. This model law will be made available to the fifty State governments. This legislation is designed to improve State laws in dealing with this serious problem and to complement the comprehensive drug legislation being proposed to Congress at the national level. Together these proposals will provide an interlocking trellis of laws which will enable government at all levels to more effectively control the problem.

III. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Most of the illicit narcotics and high potency marihuana consumed in the United States is produced abroad and clandestinely imported. I have directed the Secretary of State and the Attorney General to explore new avenues of cooperation with foreign governments to stop the production of this contraband at its source. The United States will cooperate with foreign governments working to eradicate the production of illicit drugs within their own frontiers. I have further authorized these Cabinet officers to formulate plans that will lead to meetings at the law enforcement level between the United States and foreign countries now involved in the drug traffic either as originators or avenues of transit.

IV. SUPPRESSION OF ILLEGAL IMPORTATION

Our efforts to eliminate these drugs at their point of origin will be coupled with new efforts to intercept them at their point of illegal entry into the United States. The Department of the Treasury, through the Bureau of Customs, is charged with enforcing the nation's smuggling laws. I have directed the Secretary of the Treasury to initiate a major new effort to guard the nation's borders and ports against the growing volume of narcotics from abroad. There is a recognized need for more men and facilities in the Bureau of Customs to carry out this directive. At my request, the Secretary of the Treasury has submitted a substantial program for increased manpower and facilities in the Bureau of Customs for this purpose which is under intensive review.

In the early days of this Administration, I requested that the Attorney General form an inter-departmental Task Force to conduct a comprehensive study of the problem of unlawful trafficking in narcotics and dangerous drugs. One purpose of the Task Force has been to examine the existing programs of law enforcement agencies concerned with the problem in an effort to improve their coordination and efficiency. I now want to report that this Task Force has completed its study and has a recommended plan of action, for immediate and long-term implementation, designed to substantially reduce the illicit trafficking in narcotics, marihuana and dangerous drugs across United States borders. To implement the recommended plan, I have directed the Attorney General to organize and place into immediate operation an "action task force" to undertake a frontal attack on the problem. There are high profits in the illicit market for those who smuggle narcotics and drugs into the United States; we intend to raise the risks and cost of engaging in this wretched traffic.

V. SUPPRESSION OF NATIONAL TRAFFICKING

Successful prosecution of an increased national effort against illicit drug trafficking will require not only new resources and men, but also a redeployment of existing personnel within the Department of Justice.

I have directed the Attorney General to create, within the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, a number of special investigative units. These special forces will have the capacity to

reave quickly into any area in which intelligence indicates major criminal enterprises are engaged in the narcotics traffic. To carry out this directive, there will be a need for additional manpower within the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. The budgetary request for FY 1970 now pending before the Congress will initiate this program. Additional funds will be requested in FY 1971 to fully deploy the necessary special investigative units.

VI. EDUCATION

Proper evaluation and solution of the drug problem in this country has been severely handicapped by a dearth of scientific information on the subject--and the prevalence of ignorance and misinformation. Different "experts" deliver solemn judgments which are poles apart. As a result of these conflicting judgments, Americans seem to have divided themselves on the issue, along generational lines.

There are reasons for this lack of knowledge. First, widespread drug use is a comparatively recent phenomenon in the United States. Second, it frequently involves chemical formulations which are novel, or age-old drugs little used in this country until very recently. The volume of definitive medical data remains small--and what exists has not been broadly disseminated. This vacuum of knowledge--as was predictable has been filled by rumors and rash judgments, often formed with a minimal experience with a particular drug, sometimes formed with no experience or knowledge at all.

The possible danger to the health or well-being of even a casual user of drugs is too serious to allow ignorance to prevail or for this information gap to remain open. The American people need to know what dangers and what risks are inherent in the use of the various kinds of drugs readily available in illegal markets today. I have therefore directed the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, assisted by the Attorney General through the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, to gather all authoritative information on the subject and to compile a balanced and objective educational program to bring the facts to every American--especially our young people.

With this information in hand, the overwhelming majority of students and young people can be trusted to make a prudent judgment as to their personal course of conduct.

VII. RESEARCH

In addition to gathering existing data, it is essential that we acquire new knowledge in the field. We must know more about both the short- and long-range effects of the use of drugs being taken in such quantities by so many of our people. We need more study as well to find the key to releasing men from the bonds of dependency forged by any continued drug abuse.

The National Institute of Mental Health has primary responsibility in this area, and I am further directing the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to expand existing efforts to acquire new knowledge and a broader understanding in this entire area.

VIII. REHABILITATION

Considering the risks involved, including those of arrest and prosecution, the casual experimenter with drugs of any kind, must be considered at the very least, rash and foolish. But the psychologically dependent regular users and the physically addicted are genuinely sick people. While this sickness cannot excuse the crimes they commit, it does help to explain them. Society has an obligation both to itself and to these people to help them break the chains of their dependency.

Currently, a number of federal, state and private programs of rehabilitation are being operated. These programs utilize separately and together, psychiatry, psychology and "substitute drug" therapy. At this time, however, we are without adequate data to evaluate their full benefit. We need more experience with them and more knowledge. Therefore, I am directing the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to provide every assistance to those pioneering in the field, and to sponsor and conduct research on the Federal level. This Department will act as a clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of drug abuse data and experience in the area of rehabilitation.

I have further instructed the Attorney General to insure that all Federal prisoners, who have been identified as dependent upon drugs, be afforded the most up-to-date treatment available.

IX. TRAINING PROGRAM

The enforcement of narcotics laws requires considerable expertise, and hence considerable training. The Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs provides the bulk of this training in the Federal government. Its programs are extended to include not only its own personnel, but State and local police officers, forensic chemists, foreign nationals, college deans, campus security officers, and members of industry engaged in the legal distribution of drugs.

Last year special training in the field of narcotics and dangerous drug enforcement was provided for 2700 State and local law enforcement officials. In fiscal year 1969 we expanded the program an estimated 300 percent in order to train some 11,000 persons. During the current fiscal year we plan to redouble again that effort--to provide training to 22,000 State and local officers. The training of these experts must keep pace with the rise in the abuse of drugs, if we are ever to control it.

X. LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCES

The Attorney General intends to begin a series of conferences with law enforcement executives from the various States and concerned Federal officials. The purposes of these conferences will be several: first, to obtain firsthand information, more accurate data, on the scope of the drug problem at that level; second, to discuss the specific areas where Federal assistance and aid can best be most useful; third, to exchange ideas and evaluate mutual policies. The end result we hope will be a more coordinated effort that will bring us visible progress for the first time in an alarming decade.

These then are the first ten steps in the national effort against narcotic marihuana and other dangerous drug abuse. Many steps are already underway. Many will depend upon the support of the Congress. I am asking, with this message, that you act swiftly and favorably on the legislative proposals that will soon be forthcoming, along with the budgetary requests required if our efforts are to be successful. I am confident that Congress shares with me the grave concern over this critical problem, and that Congress will do all that is necessary to mount and continue a new and effective federal program aimed at eradicating this rising sickness in our land.

RICHARD NIXON

The White House

July 14, 1969

Dangerous Drugs.," July 14, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2126>.