

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Barry McCaffrey as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy

March 6, 1996

Thank you, Justice Ginsburg. I want to say a special word of welcome to Mrs. Jill McCaffrey, and to all of General McCaffrey's family who are here, to Attorney General Reno and Secretary Shalala, and our FBI Director, Louis Freeh, to Senator Biden and Congressman Zeliff, and to all the distinguished members of the Government and the military who are here.

I would like to begin with a simple and heartfelt thank you to General McCaffrey for accepting this call to lead our Nation's battle against drugs. Service to our country runs in his family. In fact, we have three generations of McCaffrey service in attendance here today, as you saw standing with me.

The general's father, Bill McCaffrey, who is here with his wife, Mary, is a retired lieutenant general who saw combat in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Two of his three children are pursuing careers in the military. His son, who is also here, drove all night from Fort Bragg, which is a testimony to the fact, General, that the physical training is still adequate to the task. *[Laughter]* He is an Army captain stationed at Fort Polk in Louisiana. His daughter Tara is an Army National Guard nurse. His other daughter, Amy, is a graduate student at Central Washington College. The McCaffrey family is a shining example of what is right with America. We are fortunate to have their service and their presence here today.

General McCaffrey has faced down many threats to America's security, from guerrilla warfare in the jungles of Vietnam to the unprecedented ground war in the sands of Desert Storm. Now he faces a more insidious but no less formidable enemy in illegal drugs.

Drugs are as much a threat to our security as any outside enemy is today. They are a leading cause of crime and violence. They add literally billions of dollars to health care costs every year. There is a new CDC report that says that drugs are the cause of at least half—one-half—of all the new HIV infections in the United States. And drugs are imperiling our Nation's most precious resource, our children.

As I said in the State of the Union, if we ever expect to reduce crime and violence in

our country to the low level that would make it the exception rather than the rule, we have to reduce the drug problem. We know it is a difficult battle. We know that overall drug use and crime are down in every segment of our society except one, our young people. And that makes the battle more difficult and more important.

The glamorization of drugs and violence is a big reason for this. That's why I worked so hard for the V-chip and for the television rating system. That's why we need to stop the glorification of drugs in our popular culture. And for those who say we should throw in the towel and just make drugs legal,¹ I say, not on my watch. I don't believe in that. That would be a mistake.

Over the last two decades we have made significant progress in this effort. Just in 1979, more than 22 million Americans used illegal drugs; 5 million used cocaine. Today less than 12 million Americans are regular drug users, and the number of cocaine users has dropped 30 percent in the past 3 years. But the problem is still too great, and I say again, it is perplexing and troubling as it affects our juvenile population. Drug use among people 18 to 34 is down. Casual drug use among people under 18 is up. That may be why the crime rate is down overall in our country but random violence among people under 18—our children and our future—is still up.

Tomorrow General McCaffrey and I will have the opportunity to address this, along with others in the administration, at our National Conference on Youth and Violence. And this is a good way to kick it off, with his service.

In the last 3 years we have tried to take many concrete steps to protect our children and their future. We're working to get hard-core drug users off the street, to make sure they can't commit crimes, and to get them into treatment. We're bringing drug prevention to our schools by teaching our children that drugs are wrong, illegal, and dangerous. We've put more

¹ White House correction.

police on the street, and that is a major cause of the decline in the crime rate.

Two months ago I signed a directive requiring drug testing of Federal arrestees. We are doing all we can to stop drugs at their source, before they get to our borders. Just yesterday our U.S. Customs officials began seizing all imports of the sedative Rohypnol, which has been associated of late with date rape.

But General McCaffrey and all of us know that we have to do more. We have to do much more. There's no one more capable to lead this effort than Barry McCaffrey. He is America's most highly decorated combat veteran. He earned two Distinguished Service Cross Awards for extraordinary valor in Vietnam. He also earned two Silver Stars for heroism and three Purple Hearts. He served two tours in Vietnam, where he was severely wounded by enemy gunfire. He led the now famous left hook maneuver that crushed the Iraqi army in Desert Storm. And for the last 2 years he's been on the frontlines of our efforts to stop drugs at their source in his role as commander in chief of the United States Southern Command based in Panama.

As part of our counternarcotics team, he displayed decisive leadership in strengthening the efforts in Latin America, including forming one of the most successful international coalitions against drugs that has ever existed in that region. In addition to his heroism on the battlefield, General McCaffrey has distinguished himself as a man of ideas, a brilliant man of ideas, especially the one that Justice Ginsburg thought so much of that she mentioned a few moments ago.

He has always taken a comprehensive view towards problem solving, and he knows that our efforts in the struggle against drugs will require a combination of treatment, prevention, education, enforcement, and interdiction. Teamwork and coalition building are not just words to him; he has done it. Teamwork and coalition building literally saved his life and the lives of his soldiers. There is no doubt that he has the talent, the courage, and the vision to take up this fight.

But he cannot do it alone. As I said in the State of the Union, he's going to need a larger force than he has ever commanded before, indeed, a larger force than he and his colleagues who have come from the Pentagon to join him today have ever commanded before. He's going to need every American doing his or her part

if we are going to succeed. It means that we have to begin with parents talking firmly and clearly with their children, with our communities, our houses of worship, our schools, our employers, our national and community groups. The fight against drugs must in the end be a citizens campaign because every citizen has a direct stake in the outcome.

General, I want you to have the tools you need. For the last 3 years I have challenged Congress to do its part. In each of those years Congress has appropriated less than I asked for counternarcotics efforts in the Department of Defense and other agencies. America must never send its troops into battle without adequate resources to get the job done.

That's why today I am directing General McCaffrey to take the first step to make sure that we are adequately armed to fight this battle. As your first act of duty, I direct you to prepare a plan to amend the 1996 fiscal year budget through reallocating \$250 million from the Department of Defense budget so that it can be added to our counternarcotics efforts. I will submit the plan to Congress this month. I'm also directing you to examine the fiscal year '97 budget to determine if a similar reallocation is needed.

We have to get after this. We have to get General McCaffrey off to a good start. I believe that he will get our country off to a good start. Our national security, the well-being of our children are at stake. We can create a safer, more drug-free society. We can do this if we work together.

As I have said many times in different contexts, when we are divided as a country, we defeat ourselves, but when America is united, we never lose. I believe Barry McCaffrey will help to unite America, and I believe he will help us to win this great and enduring struggle for our character, our soul, and the future of our children.

Thank you again, General McCaffrey, for laying down your four stars to reach for the stars. We appreciate you. Your country is grateful. And I ask you now to come and say what's on your mind.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.