

NOTE: The First Lady presented the Presidential Citizens Medal to Elinor Guggenheimer in New York City on behalf of the President. An original was not available for verification of this citation.

## Remarks to the Coast Guard in Miami, Florida December 11, 1997

Thank you very much, Lieutenant Britton, for your service and for that very thorough account of your activities. I hope that none of the Coast Guard will ever have to engage in ice-breaking in this area. *[Laughter]*

Admiral Kramek, Admiral Saunders, Admiral Rufe, the men and women of the Coast Guard; Secretary Slater, thank you for your remarks and your work. General McCaffrey, thank you for the extraordinary job you have done in such a short time in focusing our Nation's attention on the drug problem and, even more importantly, coming up with a strategy with which to approach it, a strategy that is beginning to show significant results.

Acting Customs Commissioner Banks, SOUTHCOM Commander General Wilhelm—I noticed that a lot of people laughed, General, when General McCaffrey said that you had a higher intellect than your two predecessors. One of them was General McCaffrey—I can understand him putting himself down—*[laughter]*—I don't know what General Clark thinks about it. *[Laughter]*

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and my good friend Lieutenant Governor MacKay, thank you all for being here and for the support that you give to the United States in the work we have to do here to deal with the drug problem. Thank all of you for coming. I see a lot of my friends out in the audience, including State Senator Daryl Jones—I'm glad to see you. And of all the men and women of the Coast Guard here, I can't help noticing that my immediate past Coast Guard military aide is now a deputy group commander in St. Petersburg, Lieutenant Commander June Ryan, and I'm glad to see her over there with General Wilhelm, earning an honest living for a change after escaping the political life of Washington. *[Laughter]*

Before I get into my remarks about what you're doing here, Lieutenant Britton mentioned the fact that the Coast Guard is not involved

in ice-breaking, but with El Niño, who knows. *[Laughter]* Now, we all laughed about that, but the truth is, as many of you know better than most of our fellow country men and women, there is an enormous body of evidence that the climate of the Earth is warming at a more rapid rate than at any time in the last 10,000 years. Many, many scientists believe in the next 100 years the climate will go—the average temperature will go up someplace between 2 and 6 degrees. To give you some idea of what the consequences of that kind of change were in the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, the average climate—average—climate temperature was only about 9 degrees lower than it is now.

If it were to happen that we had a significant increase in temperature within a brief period, huge lowland areas in the United States, including big portions of south Florida, and island nations in the Pacific could be completely flooded. That is why the nations of the world have been meeting in Japan to try to find a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce global warming in a way that permits us to continue to grow our economies and work together in a responsible way.

Yesterday, at the eleventh hour, the nations reached an agreement. I think it's of great relevance, especially to south Florida. It is environmentally strong, and it's economically sound. There's still a lot of challenges ahead. I believe we have to get the developing countries more involved because this is a global problem, not an American problem or a rich country problem. But this is a huge first step.

And I would urge all of you—I see already the papers are full of people saying, "The sky is falling; the sky is falling. It's a terrible thing." Every time we've tried to improve the American environment in the last 25 or 30 years, somebody has predicted that it would wreck the economy. And the air is cleaner, the water is cleaner, the food supply is safer, there are fewer toxic waste dumps, and the last time I checked,

we had the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. So don't believe the skeptics. Give us a chance to make the case. And I just don't want the Coast Guard to be out there riding on any higher seas than we have already. And I think it's the right thing to do.

Let me also say that I want to express sincere thanks to all the people in the Coast Guard who do this work. I thank the crew of the Cutter *Chandeleur* for the tour I just got. I had the chance to see some of the new technologies that are making a tough job just a little easier and making smugglers' lives quite a bit harder.

For the last 5 years, we have been moving this country toward the 21st century, with a vision to provide opportunity for everyone responsible enough to work for it, to maintain our leadership in the world, and to pull our increasingly diverse people closer together. That has required us to have an aggressive view of what the National Government's role is, but a very different one, not that we could sit on the sidelines or that we could solve all the problems but that we had a sharpened responsibility to create the conditions and give people the tools to solve their own problems and make the most of their own lives.

Our economy is the healthiest in a generation. Our world leadership is strong. We're making headway across a whole range of social problems. Crime is at its lowest rate in 24 years. We've had a record drop in people on the welfare rolls, moving into the workplace. But surely we cannot meet all the challenges facing the American people unless we can break the deadly grip of crime related to drugs, and drug dependence itself, on our people especially and on our communities across the country.

I've come to Causeway Island today because I want America to know that off the coast of Florida you are waging a battle for America's future and America's children. The ammo is live, the dangers are real, and I want America to know you are making a big difference.

Almost 2 years ago, General McCaffrey and I came with the Attorney General to Miami to launch a comprehensive antidrug strategy for the Nation, a commonsense plan to address an uncommonly complex problem: prevention to keep children from turning to drugs, treatment to help break the cycle of addiction and crime, interdiction to reduce the flow of drugs, law enforcement to break up the sources of supply,

and the largest counterdrug budget in history to back it up.

Thanks in no small measure to heroic efforts on the high seas, in the air, and along our borders, the strategy is starting to show promising results. In the areas of interdiction, the Coast Guard and its partners have just completed a banner year, increasing arrests of traffickers by 1,000 percent and seizures of cocaine by 300 percent. You've been true to your motto, *Semper Paratus*, and I know you're too modest to do it, but I think all the rest of us—and you can join in if you like—should give the United States Coast Guard a big hand for a remarkable year. [Applause]

I also want to congratulate the Customs Service on its success, particularly the drug seizure off the coast of Miami earlier this week. It's a feat worthy of one of these television movies—one officer, Senior Special Agent Joe Goulet, who is here with us today—stand up. Where are you? [Applause] Now, listen to this. You did not see this in a technologically altered movie. This happened. He singlehandedly pulled alongside a drug-running vessel cutting through the waves at 20 miles an hour, disabled the vessel, and dove back into his own vessel before it raced away. I can't tie my shoes that fast. [Laughter] With the help of Coast Guard personnel and air support, he and his fellow Customs officers seized more than 2,000 pounds of cocaine, the 10th major seizure in south Florida in the last 6 weeks alone.

This is an impressive record. But we know we must do more because the drug cartels will do more; after all, there's a lot of money in this. So we're already deploying new technologies, increasing the Customs budget, doubling the number of Border Patrol agents along the Southwest border. And today I'm committing another \$73 million to the Defense Department's \$800 million counternarcotics budget to help support the interdiction efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean. I want to especially thank the Secretary of Defense, Bill Cohen, for his leadership on these initiatives and to thank our Armed Forces leaders for their continuing dedication to this part of America's security mission.

As General McCaffrey said, in all this we'll have to continue to work even more closely with our neighbors and our allies across the hemisphere. Mexico will soon launch with us our first joint counterdrug strategy. This spring we'll

be with all the democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean at the Summit of the Americas in Chile, where we will do our best to build a true hemispheric alliance against drugs.

We'll also continue to work as we work to protect our borders, with law enforcement on the streets of America, targeting gang violence associated with drugs, helping people to adopt the kinds of strategies that where adopted have led to dramatic drops in drug trafficking and violence. I can just tell you, to cite one example, it has now been more than 2 years since a single child has been killed by a gun on the streets of the city of Boston, Massachusetts—more than 2 years in one of our largest American cities. If we can do that in one city, we ought to be able to do that in every city, and we owe our children and their future no less.

The one thing General McCaffrey recognized not long after he took office is that we can spend all the money in the world on interdiction, we can spend all the money in the world on law enforcement, we can spend all the money in the world even on preventive strategies, but somehow, some way, our children have to decide that we will stop becoming the world's largest consumer of drugs. If we have 4 percent of the world's population and we consume nearly half the drugs, we're going to have trouble. There will be big money in it, and we'll have to put big money and enormous resources and the lives of our finest young people in uniform against the effort. We have got to change the culture in America which has so many of our young people becoming willing drug users. The numbers are encouraging. They're going down, but they're still far too large.

A lot of this has to be done by people who deal with our young people one on one, starting with their parents. But Government can help. I want to applaud General McCaffrey for having the guts to go to Congress and ask them to give us \$195 million for a media campaign next month. Every other serious endeavor in the United States is accompanied by a media campaign. But when we decided to ask for this, a lot of people thought we had slipped a gasket, because it made General McCaffrey and the

whole effort so subject to cheap political attack. But in fairness to the Members of Congress, there was very little of it. And everyone understood that this was not a Democratic or a Republican issue, this was an American issue. And we had to reach our children however we could, whenever we could, in the best way that we could. So I thank you, General, for one more time risking a bullet for America's future.

I want to say, when these things start, I hope they will remind the parents, the teachers, the coaches, the religious leaders that they have to take the lead in making our children strong enough to take the right stands and turn away from drugs. This is not—this war on drugs, as it's often called, is somehow misleading, I think, in the sense that it's not an offensive against a single enemy conducted by a single army. Instead, it's more like one of Lieutenant Britton's hobbies. She just ran in a marathon race where there are lots of people running at different paces in different ways. Everyone that finishes ought to get a medal. And it requires strength and determination and conditioning and unbelievable patience. It requires also a certain courage never, never to stop in the face of the relentless obstacles ahead. That's what this is. We're making progress in this marathon. The Coast Guard is leading the way. But all of us have a role to play, and we better determine to play it if we expect the 21st century to be America's best years. That's what I expect, and I think you do, too.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the U.S. Coast Guard Station. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Megan Britton, USCG, Duty Officer, Seventh District Command Center; Adm. Robert E. Kramek, USCG, Coast Guard Commandant; Rear Adm. Norm Saunders, USCG, Commander, 7th Coast Guard District; Vice Adm. Roger T. Rufe, USCG, Commander, Atlantic Area; Gen. Charles E. Wilhelm, USMC, Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command; Gen. Wesley K. Clark, USA, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida.