

I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 996, the School Construction Act, and I encourage my colleagues to support this important legislation. It will help us leverage up to \$7.2 billion in local school construction bonds. It will help solve the problems that we were sent here to solve. It is a good bill. It is the right bill for America. I encourage our colleagues to support it.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ).

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, as a country, we are in an enviable position. The United States is prospering due to a sound economic policy, low unemployment, and a balanced budget, but we must not rest on these accomplishments. We must build and go forward. We must now address the most important issue facing our country, the need to improve our educational system. We have the opportunity now to invest in our children and in our futures.

Last year we started down the road to improving our public school system by making a commitment to hire 100,000 new teachers at the early grade levels in an effort to reduce class size. This will allow us over the next several years to reduce the national average class size to 18 students. In addition, this will ensure that we are providing a solid foundation in the essential basics during the crucial early years of child development.

What the last Congress did not accomplish we must accomplish in this Congress. Our Nation's schools need to be modernized and, in many cases, rebuilt. As we head towards the 21st century, we cannot allow our children to be forced to learn in dilapidated schools and in crowded temporary facilities.

In my home town of San Antonio, I have visited schools where space is so limited that teachers' offices are in tiny rooms which once served as utility closets. If we are looking for improved results, we must afford the best learning environment for all of our children. We must, in modernizing schools, continue to provide them with the ability to access the Internet, not only as an educational tool but also as a teacher training tool.

In addition, we must establish incentives to recruit and maintain highly qualified teachers, providing increased support through teacher training in specific fields of expertise.

The President, in his State of the Union Address and in his administration's budget, has proposed a comprehensive program to improve our public school system. I believe the administration's educational agenda is headed in the right direction, and I support the President's proposal to provide approximately \$22 billion in interest-free funds for school modernization.

□ 1600

These funds will benefit schools in virtually all of our districts, in some cases rebuilding schools that were built before we very first entered the public school system.

Recently there has been much talk about a global economy. If we as a country and our children as the future leaders of this country are to participate and prosper from that economy, we must stop the erosion of the public school system and work to ensure that the public school system not only improves but thrives as we enter the 21st Century.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, just in closing, I want to thank my colleagues. We built these schools after World War II to take care of the G.I. men and women who came back after fighting that war. We built them then; we can build them now. I hope we will build them.

#### DRUG WAR IN THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REYNOLDS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 30 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to come before the House tonight to talk once again about the drug situation in the United States and the various questions related to drug policy that face the United States Congress.

I had the privilege to be named as the chair of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources of the House of Representatives, which will be charged with both authorization responsibility as it relates to national drug policy and also oversight of our drug policy for the House of Representatives as we begin to try to fashion a coherent policy for the United States.

It is my privilege tonight to again bring to the attention of my fellow Members of Congress and also the American people the situation we have facing us relating to the ravages of illegal narcotics.

It is interesting that, at this hour, the President of the United States is in Central America, and he is there because 9,000 people died in a natural disaster, Hurricane Mitch. It is rightful that this Nation try to assist those countries in Central America, other allies and friends, neighbors to the south who have seen the ravages of a natural disaster. However, those 9,000 people killed by a natural disaster do not equal those killed in the United States just in 1 year due to the drug abuse problem and illegal narcotics.

Drug abuse killed, last year in 1998, 14,218 Americans at a cost of \$67 billion. These are the ravages of a war on drugs that we have been losing, a man-made disaster that has taken thousands and thousands and thousands of

lives. Just during the time of the Clinton administration, before it expires in its 8 years, over 100,000 Americans will die because of drug-related deaths.

In my area in central Florida, and I brought this little clipping from the newspaper, this headline of the Orlando Sentinel, "Drug deaths top homicides," and this is from the last few weeks of last year, December 23, 1998, the headline disclaiming that, in peaceful central Florida, affluent to good economy, the drug deaths are now topping homicides as a cause of death in our area. That is why I believe this particular problem is so important to me.

It is not just central Florida where we have a problem. A recent DEA report says that close to 4,000 Americans have died in each of the last 3 years from heroin-related overdoses. We are seeing more and more deaths as a result of high purity, high quality heroin that is coming into the United States.

Additional statistics should alarm every Member of Congress and every American. More than 6 percent of the population over 12 years of age, 13.9 million people have used drugs within the past 30 days, according to official estimates. Rates of use remain highest among persons age 16 to 25.

What is so devastating about the headline that I held up, the heroin deaths in my area, the drug-related deaths is, most of these are our young people, young teenagers in many instances who find themselves the victims of deadly drug overdoses. This age group is the most affected by the drugs that we see on the street. In fact, in our young teenagers, an astounding fact in the last 6 years, there has been an 875 percent increase in heroin use by teenagers, young people, again victims of high quality heroin and higher amounts of heroin being imported and transited into this country.

The use of crack cocaine and powder cocaine rose gradually in the 1990s as young people's views of how dangerous they were began to erode. In general, crack use continues to show an upward drift in the lower grades. Again, these are among school children in 1998. And this is another disturbing trend we see again in a very young group of vulnerable Americans.

The combination of low price and high quality has helped drive the number of heroin users in the United States from 600,000 to 810,000 in the past 3 years. This is according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and this is just a recent release of these statistics. Over 210,000 additional heroin users in the United States in just a short period of time.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy also estimates that 59 percent of the estimated 176 tons of South American cocaine processed in 1998 was smuggled into the United States through Mexico. Mexico, in fact, is the leading smuggler of heroin, methamphetamine, and the base ingredient for methamphetamine, as well as other drugs coming into the United States.

We know where heroin is coming from. We know where cocaine is coming from. We know where methamphetamine is coming from. That is why I was saddened and disappointed in this administration in, again, certifying the country of Mexico as fully cooperating with the United States in eliminating illegal narcotic production and trafficking when the facts are that Mexico is producing more heroin than it has ever produced. That is also according to our DEA, our Drug Enforcement Agency.

Additionally, not only are they producing more heroin, more hard drugs, more heroin and more cocaine are transiting through Mexico in the United States than any other country. In fact, it is estimated that between 60 and 70 percent of all the hard narcotics that enter the United States transit through Mexico today. That is an alarming fact.

What is even more disturbing is that, even given these facts, the administration again has certified Mexico as fully cooperating with the United States in trying to stop trafficking and transit and production of drugs, as is a simple request in the law that was passed by this Congress in 1986.

Now some people would give Mexico the benefit of the doubt in this situation. I chaired a subcommittee hearing recently, and we had in before our subcommittee the DEA administrator Tom Constantine. Tom Constantine testified in our hearing, and he also testified in the other body, and this is what he stated. He stated the corruption among Mexican anti-drug authority was, and let me quote his exact words, "unparalleled with anything I have seen in 39 years of police work."

He added that the Mexican Cartel spends \$6 billion a year to bribe Mexican government officials. That is more than one-third of the total U.S. anti-drug budget. Now that is they spend \$6 million to bribe Mexican officials.

So is Mexico fully cooperating when our chief drug enforcement officer for the Nation says he has never seen such corruption in nearly four decades of police work? Additionally, the incredible amount of money that is being spent for bribes and corruptions.

What disturbs me after the testimony that I heard from Director Constantine was that Mexico has not only been involved in corruption, and that is from the lowest level, the policeman on the street, to the highest level in the former president's office, what has taken place now is narcoterrorism in its embryonic stages.

What I mean here is that complete areas of Mexico have been taken over by narcotraffickers. We know that as a matter of fact. We have testimony that says that the Baja Peninsula, the entire western portion of Mexico, south of the United States and California, is now run by one of the drug cartels, completely controlled, completely corrupt, not only corruption where they have been bribing officials, but now a

corruption far beyond that that deals with narcoterrorism, patterns that we have seen in Colombia and other areas where narcoterrorists have taken over.

What they have done should scare every Mexican citizen, should scare every citizen of the United States. Just a few months ago, they lined up 22 individuals, women and children, and they were brutally slain. They have also taken police officers and slain them, propped them up in police cars, to use as an example.

So this fear and intimidation in the Baja Peninsula is an example of a country losing control of an entire state and entire region and again should be a tremendous concern to we who share a 2,000 mile border.

In addition to losing the Baja Peninsula, we have been told that the Yucatan Peninsula has also been taken over by narcoterrorists, that the government of that state, that Mexican state is totally corrupt, and also under the control of international Mexican drug dealers.

It is rather sad and it is rather ironic that the President of the United States would go to Mexico, offer Mexico additional financial assistance, additional foreign aid from the United States, and additional benefits in trade and other assistance of a good neighbor, international finance help, when we have, again, a country which is totally consumed by this narcotrafficking.

Ironically, the conference between President Zedillo and the President of the United States and others in that delegation was held in Merida, which is the principal city of the Yucatan Peninsula. In addition to those areas, other areas were told of Mexico. In the mountains to the south and west of Mexico City and entire states and regions are now controlled in a corrupt and terrorist fashion by narcoterrorists.

Again our DEA, administration, other international observers, and press accounts document that Mexico is a country on the edge of being lost.

□ 1615

How important is it that we get this situation under control? It is absolutely vital, because, again, we know exactly where the illegal narcotics are coming from. They are being both produced now in Mexico, again larger quantities of heroin being produced there, methamphetamine originating from Mexico and coming into the United States, transiting into the United States.

How are they transiting into the United States? Through open commercial borders. And how did that take place? Through the United States extending a trade benefit to the country of Mexico through NAFTA, through other trade agreements, to be a good open trading partner.

So in our effort to extend trade assistance and trade benefits to the country lying to the south of us, we are now seeing a dramatic increase, again with

an open, nearly open commercial border, of hard illegal narcotics into the United States. Now, what do we get in return? We get in return a flow of drugs across the borders that is unparalleled in the history of the United States.

Now, we have tried our best to be good partners with our neighbor, Mexico. Two years ago this Congress took up a resolution of decertification and, rather than decertify Mexico, we outlined about six agenda items that we would like Mexico to assist us with as, again, good partners. Having given them incredible finance benefits, bailing them out; having given them trade benefits that I have talked about, opening our commercial borders, we asked for a little bit of help in what we could see as a tide of illegal narcotics comes into our country. We outlined on this floor of the House of Representatives six simple requests and asked Mexico to assist with those items.

Let me repeat some of those items, and, again, all passed by the House of Representatives some 2 years ago this month.

First, we asked Mexico to allow our agents to protect themselves. Our DEA agents, our drug enforcement agents, in Mexico, to protect themselves. And also to authorize appropriate privileges and immunities for such agents. That is part of the language here.

What have they done? Actually, they put a cap on the number of agents. Did they cooperate? When we found one of the most incredible scandals of money laundering and corruption that we have ever uncovered in the international scene in Mexico, with Mexican banking officials, did Mexico cooperate with the United States in trying to bring these corrupt Mexican bankers to justice? No. What they did should be offensive to every Member of Congress, everyone in our Federal law enforcement agencies. They threatened to indict our customs officials who uncovered this corruption.

So was anything paid attention to by Mexico on the first item that we asked for some 2 years ago? Absolutely no. Actually, they took offensive action against the United States. They did not fully cooperate. In fact, they tried to block and penalize those involved in the investigation.

We also asked Mexico to root out corruption and also to extradite major drug traffickers.

Now, here we are, in March of 1999, and what has Mexico done with our second request, which was to extradite major drug traffickers? Not one major drug trafficker has been extradited from Mexico to the United States. Not one Mexican national to this day. So the second item of request, and a very specific item that this Congress asked of Mexico, has not been adhered to or met in any way by Mexico.

The third request, and, again, let me take these right out of the resolution that was passed here in the House, we asked for assistance in securing a maritime agreement, a simple maritime

agreement that would allow us to go after drug traffickers who were on the high seas and also in waters as Mexican nationals.

To date, we have not had a maritime agreement signed with the country of Mexico. To my knowledge, there is only one other country in the entire region that has not signed a maritime agreement with the United States, and that is Haiti.

And that is another sad example of a failure of this administration, which spent millions of dollars trying to build up the judicial system and the institutions in Haiti. Actually, we spent billions. And those dollars have been wasted, because there still is total disorganization in the Haitian government. There is corruption. It also has turned into a major drug trafficking area, and they have not even been able to seat a parliament to sign or agree on a maritime agreement.

But, again, back to Mexico, we have a situation where, after repeated requests, Mexico still has not signed a maritime agreement to help us with international narcotics trafficking.

Additionally, we asked in this resolution that Mexico assist with locating radar to the south. That is a simple request, because we know drugs transiting and trafficking through Mexico are coming in through the peninsula and it is a simple request to have them assist us by locating radar in the south. Have they done that? No, once again.

Additionally, we asked them to crack down on corruption. And we have done everything we can to ask them to go after officials at the highest level and the lowest level in Mexico who are involved in illegal narcotics trafficking.

And what are the comments that we get back? Again, I would defer to our chief drug enforcement agent when he says that he has never seen a situation in four decades so rife with corruption, a situation where it is almost impossible to trust any agency, where there is only a handful of people that will assist in any way in the country.

So these are the requests that the United States Congress made of Mexico some 2 years ago, asking them to assist us. Even the other body passed a resolution asking that Mexico assist the United States. To date, we have not had a satisfactory response from Mexico in this regard.

At this juncture we are at an important point in our deliberations, as far as the United States House of Representatives is concerned, as to what we do to get Mexico to comply. I personally would not like to have to decertify Mexico, however, a resolution has been introduced in the House of Representatives by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS), and he has been joined by others, and there are more and more folks in the House that would like to decertify Mexico.

We held a hearing last week and asked the General Accounting Office to report to the Subcommittee on Crimi-

nal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources of the Committee on Government Reform about the situation in Mexico. We asked the GAO to give us the straight scoop, to tell us what is going on in Mexico. Do they deserve certification; are they cooperating? The GAO testified and summarized some of the problems with Mexico, and let me read them for the RECORD.

Number one. Mexico is one of the largest centers for narcotics-related business in the world.

Number two. Mexico is still the principal transit country for cocaine entering the United States.

Number three. Mexico is either a producer, refiner, or transit point for cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and heroin.

Number four. Mexico is a major hub for the recycling of drug proceeds.

Number five. Mexico's Juarez drug trafficking organization is as powerful and as dangerous as Colombia's Medellin and Calais cartels used to be.

Number six. Mexico's poorest border and the dawning volume of legitimate cross-border traffic provides nearly limitless opportunities for the smuggling of illicit drugs and the proceeds of sales of these drugs.

And the seventh item that GAO covered in reviewing what is taking place is that several years ago the United States gave 72 Hughey helicopters and four C-26 aircraft for narcotics operations, as a good neighbor, as a friend, to try to get Mexico to use these in going after trafficking and eradication of the crops there. Unfortunately, Mexico has not provided the resources to keep these helicopters and aircraft flying, even after a promise of using them in the future, which they have not done and not made an effort.

So here we have the testimony from the General Accounting Office of the United States which documents very clearly all the points that I have made previously in analyzing whether or not Mexico is fully cooperating with the United States to do two things, one, to stop the production of illegal narcotics and, two, to stop the transiting, and those are really the cornerstones of the certification law.

Many folks do not understand, even those in Congress do not understand, the certification law. The certification law is quite simple. It asks those two things: stop producing drugs; stop transiting in drugs. The Department of State and the President must certify to the Congress that a country is, and the term is, "cooperating fully" to do those two things.

Now, what do they get in return if they cooperate fully? They are certified as "fully cooperating" and then are eligible for United States foreign assistance. So what they get in return for being certified that they are "fully cooperating" is United States foreign assistance in the form of foreign aid, in the form of trade benefits, and in the form of international finance support.

So the question before the Congress in the next few days and few weeks is,

as we conduct this investigation, this review of who is helping us in this war on drugs, and particularly the biggest offender, the biggest source of illegal narcotics, is Mexico fully cooperating?

The evidence to date does not lead us to believe that they are fully cooperating. The evidence to date does not lead us to believe that they should be certified as fully cooperating. The evidence is pretty clear to date that Mexico should not receive benefits of the United States government because they are not cooperating, because they are the biggest source of deadly drugs and narcotics coming into the United States across our borders from Mexico.

Again, if we review what we requested 2 years ago from the list of requests, can we say that they have cooperated? The answer is unequivocally no, they have not cooperated with any of these requests. They have not been a good ally. They have not been a good friend.

And the result, as we saw, is devastating: 14,218 Americans died last year as a result of drug-related deaths. Over 100,000 will die. Many more than died in hurricane Mitch, the natural disaster that I spoke of as I began my talk. And they are dying today. They are dying in this city, in Washington, D.C.; they are dying in Orlando, Florida; they are dying in Plano, Texas, and across our great land.

We have a responsibility to our people. We have a responsibility to the laws that we have passed. We must hold these countries accountable. We must find some mechanism to stop drugs at their source, to stop drugs where they are trafficking from, and to make certain that we take this death and destruction off the streets of the United States of America.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, we will continue our review, our investigation, and our oversight of Mexico's cooperation with the United States, and we will find some mechanism to ensure cooperation. We will find some mechanism to stop these illegal narcotics.

□ 1630

I intend to work with my colleagues on the other side of the Capitol in an effort to see again that we bring this situation under control and that we hold those responsible accountable and that we stop this death and destruction that is at our doorstep, not just in my hometown but throughout our land and throughout our Nation. I will continue to come to the floor every week and discuss this situation as it relates to the national narcotics and drug abuse problem that we have. We will find solutions. Again, I have pledged that. And to work with those on the other side of the aisle to find solutions to this and to my colleagues again down the hall on the other side of the Capitol.