

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL A. BRUCE BERAN  
COMMANDER, ELEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT

AND

COORDINATOR  
NATIONAL NARCOTICS BORDER INTERDICTION SYSTEM,  
PACIFIC REGION

BEFORE THE  
HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

JANUARY 16, 1986

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I AM REAR ADMIRAL A. BRUCE BERAN, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD. I AM THE COMMANDER OF THE ELEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT, HEADQUARTERED IN LONG BEACH, CA. MY DISTRICT RUNS FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER NORTH TO THE SANTA MARIA RIVER, ABOUT 60 MILES ABOVE SANTA BARBARA, AND INCLUDES THE STATE OF ARIZONA AND PORTIONS OF UTAH AND NEVADA. I AM ALSO THE COORDINATOR OF THE PACIFIC REGION OF THE VICE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL NARCOTICS BORDER INTERDICTION SYSTEM (NNBIS). I AM HERE TODAY IN MY CAPACITY AS THE ELEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT COMMANDER.

MY FOCUS TODAY WILL BE ON MARITIME DRUG SMUGGLING INTO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. ALTHOUGH I WILL TOUCH ON THE AIR SMUGGLING PROBLEM ACROSS OUR SOUTHERN BORDER, I WILL DEFER TO THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A MORE DETAILED PICTURE OF FEDERAL EFFORTS TO INTERDICT AIR SMUGGLING.

THE MARITIME DRUG THREAT IS KNOWN TO CONSIST OF MARIJUANA, HASHISH, THAI STICKS, HEROIN, COCAINE, AND OTHER DANGEROUS DRUGS. IT APPEARS THAT THE HARDER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES SQUEEZE DRUG SMUGGLERS IN THE GULF AND CARIBBEAN, THE MORE SMUGGLING OPERATIONS SHIFT TO THE WEST COAST. BECAUSE THE THREAT REMAINS HIGHEST IN THE SOUTHEAST, THE BULK OF THE INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND INTERDICTION EFFORTS ARE FOCUSED THERE. AS A RESULT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCURATELY ASSESS THE PROBLEM ON THE WEST COAST, OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT THERE IS A CLEAR TREND OF EXPANSION IN THE LOCAL MARKETS, AND THE SUPPLY SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT IT. WEST COAST

SMUGGLING HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN INDEPENDENT OF EAST COAST ORGANIZATIONS. AS A MEASURE OF THE SUCCESS OF OUR NATIONAL EFFORTS TO DENY AND DISRUPT THE TRAFFICKERS, THERE ARE NOW INDICATIONS OF EFFORTS BY THE LARGER, BETTER ORGANIZED AND FUNDED COLOMBIAN ORGANIZATIONS TO EXPAND THEIR EAST COAST SMUGGLING OPERATIONS TO THE WEST COAST. THE WEST COASTS OF COLOMBIA AND MEXICO ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT SHIPPING AND TRANSSHIPMENT POINTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF NARCOTICS TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, ALONG WITH THE TRADITIONAL FLORIDA TO CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION NETWORK. I BELIEVE THIS IS BOTH IN RESPONSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT PRESSURE ON THE EAST COAST AND THE RECOGNITION THAT THERE ARE EXTREMELY LUCRATIVE MARKETS HERE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) AND U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR SHARING FORFEITED DRUG ASSETS WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, DOJ'S SUPPORT OF LOCAL TASK FORCES THROUGH ORGANIZED CRIME AND DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCES (OCDETF), AND DOJ'S FUNDING OF REGIONAL COORDINATION ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE WESTERN STATES INFORMATION NETWORK (WSIN), FUNCTION AS VITAL CONTROL PROGRAMS TO COUNTER THIS EXPANSION.

THE NATIONAL NARCOTICS INTELLIGENCE CONSUMERS COMMITTEE (NNICC) HAS ESTIMATED, THAT IN 1984, ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF THE MARIJUANA CONSUMED IN THE UNITED STATES WAS SMUGGLED IN. THE PERCENTAGE ON THE WEST COAST, HOWEVER, IS LOWER DUE TO LOCAL DOMESTIC PRODUCTION. THE NNICC ALSO ESTIMATES THAT APPROXIMATELY 40 PERCENT OF THE MARIJUANA ORIGINATED IN COLOMBIA AND 20 PERCENT IN MEXICO, WITH THE REMAINING PERCENTAGES FROM SEVERAL SMALLER

SOURCE COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF THIS MARIJUANA IS SHIPPED INTO FLORIDA AND THE GULF, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT INTERDICTION EFFORTS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND THE GULF ARE CAUSING A GRADUAL SHIFT IN DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS AWAY FROM THESE TRADITIONAL AREAS. MEXICO IS RESURGING AS A SOURCE COUNTRY FOR MARIJUANA POSSIBLY AS A RESULT OF OPERATIONS LIKE HAT TRICK AND SUCCESSFUL ERADICATION EFFORTS IN COLOMBIA. ALSO, MEXICO IS A MAJOR COCAINE TRANSSHIPMENT COUNTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES. FURTHER, THE MARINE SMUGGLING OF HASHISH AND THAI STICKS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA, TO HAWAIIAN, ALASKAN AND MAINLAND U.S. PORTS IS INCREASINGLY POPULAR. ONCE IN THESE PORTS, ILLEGAL NARCOTICS CAN BE SHIPPED ANYWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT FURTHER CUSTOMS CHECKS.

THE PRIMARY DRUGS BEING TRANSPORTED BY SEA FROM LATIN AMERICA ARE COCAINE AND MARIJUANA, WITH MARIJUANA BY FAR THE LARGER VOLUME PRODUCT. HOWEVER, WE ARE SEEING A DEFINITE DECREASE IN MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING FROM COLOMBIA (WITH MEXICO TAKING UP MUCH OF THE SLACK). COCAINE SMUGGLING HAS INCREASED THOUGH, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF COCAINE'S HIGHER VALUE, SMALLER VOLUME, EASE OF TRANSPORT, CONCEALMENT AND DISPOSAL IF LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES.

MARITIME SHIPMENT OF ILLEGAL DRUGS TO THE WEST COAST EMPLOYS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE METHODS: THE FIRST IS BY TRANSSHIPMENT FROM A MOTHERSHIP TO OTHER VESSELS OR TO SHORE, IN OR NEAR A THIRD COUNTRY. FOR EXAMPLE, A MOTHERSHIP FROM COLOMBIA MAY TRANSFER ITS CONTRABAND TO SMALLER VESSELS NEAR ISLANDS OFF THE

COAST OF COSTA RICA OR PANAMA, OR THE MOTHERSHIP MAY LAND THE CARGO IN BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO, WHERE THE SHIPMENT IS BROKEN UP INTO SMALLER LOADS FOR FURTHER SHIPMENT BY SEA, LAND, OR AIR. ONE TREND IS THE SHIPMENT UP THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA TO SMALL NORTHERN MEXICAN PORTS LIKE PUERTO PENASCO TO AVOID COAST GUARD UNITS PATROLLING OFF THE BAJA PENINSULA.

THE SECOND METHOD ALSO USES MOTHERSHIPS, BUT THESE VESSELS TRANSIT TO POINTS SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES OFF THE U.S. COAST WHERE THEY MEET CONTACT BOATS TO TAKE THE ILLICIT CARGO ASHORE.

IN THE THIRD METHOD, DRUGS ARE PICKED UP IN COLOMBIA OR A TRANSSHIPMENT COUNTRY SUCH AS PANAMA, COSTA RICA, OR MEXICO, BY U.S. PLEASURE VESSELS AND FISHING BOATS, AND TRANSPORTED DIRECTLY TO A U.S. PORT OR BROUGHT ASHORE ALONG HUNDREDS OF MILES OF ISOLATED U.S. COASTLINE BETWEEN PORTS.

THE FORTH METHOD IS SMUGGLING BY INDIVIDUAL CREWMEMBERS ABOARD LARGE COMMERCIAL VESSELS.

THE FIFTH METHOD IS SMUGGLING IN COMMERCIAL SHIPPING CONTAINERS, OFTEN VIA THIRD COUNTRIES, THAT WOULD NOT AROUSE AS MUCH SUSPICION WITH CUSTOMS OFFICIALS, AS SHIPMENTS ORIGINATING FROM TRADITIONAL SOURCE COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE INTELLIGENCE ON THE POPULARITY OF THIS METHOD.

ON THE WEST COAST, SMUGGLERS USE ALL TYPES AND SIZES OF VESSELS. THERE ARE NO EFFECTIVE VESSEL PROFILES UPON WHICH TO BASE OUR BOARDING PROGRAM. WE WORK WITH WHAT INTELLIGENCE WE GET AND AN AGGRESSIVE BOARDING PROGRAM USING CONTINUOUS COASTAL PATROLS, AND FREQUENT HARBOR AND MARINA BOARDINGS. IN TURN, THE SMUGGLERS PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO BLENDING IN WITH RECREATIONAL AND MERCHANT SHIPPING. UNLIKE THE CARIBBEAN AND THE GULF, YOU WILL NOT SEE ANY RUN-DOWN COASTAL FREIGHTERS SMUGGLING ALONG OUR SHIPPING LANES OR PULLING INTO OUR PORTS. FISHING BOATS WILL BE FROM LOCAL FLEETS, LEGITIMATELY FISHING MOST OF THE TIME. RECREATIONAL BOATS ARE CLEAN, WELL EQUIPPED AND MAINTAINED. SMUGGLERS FROM CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO STOP IN MEXICAN PORTS TO CLEAN UP THEIR BOATS AND CREWS, AND DISPOSE OF ALL BUT LOCAL CHARTS AND EXCESS SUPPLIES TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF HAVING BEEN SAILING LOCALLY. ARRIVALS IN U.S. WATERS AND PORTS ARE TIMED FOR THE WEEKENDS TO BLEND IN WITH CROWDS OF RECREATIONAL BOATERS. UNLIKE THE CARIBBEAN AND THE GULF, WE ARE DEALING WITH EXPERIENCED "BLUE WATER" SAILORS, WHO MAINTAIN THEIR BOATS WELL AND SELDOM MAKE MISTAKES.

THEIR KEY ADVANTAGE IS THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO PASS THROUGH CHOKES POINTS. THEY HAVE MILLIONS OF SQUARE MILES OF OCEAN IN WHICH TO TRANSIT. IF THEY FEEL THE LEAST BIT THREATENED, THEY SIMPLY OFF-LOAD THEIR CARGOES ALONG THE ISOLATED MEXICAN COAST AND TRUCK OR FLY THEIR LOADS ACROSS THE BORDER IN SMALLER AMOUNTS.

ANOTHER SERIOUS ASPECT OF THE THREAT IS THE ABILITY OF THE DRUG ORGANIZATIONS TO MOUNT A SERIOUS AND WELL EQUIPPED COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE CAMPAIGN AGAINST US. WE KNOW THAT THEY MONITOR OUR RADIO FREQUENCIES. FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ARE CHANGING TO VOICE PRIVACY COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNTER IT. WE KNOW THAT TRAFFICKERS ARE MAINTAINING SURVEILLANCE ON OUR CUTTERS AT THE PIER AND UNDER WAY. WE SUSPECT THEY ARE USING DECOY BOATS AND AIRCRAFT TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF OUR LIMITED PATROL RESOURCES AND EVEN MAKE FALSE REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE TO OCCUPY OUR ATTENTION. THE LAW ENFORCEMENT RADIO FREQUENCY LISTS FOUND IN RECENT DRUG RAIDS IN FLORIDA, EL PASO, AND LOS ANGELES, ARE NOT NEW REVELATIONS. TRAFFICKERS HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY HAVE THE WILLINGNESS AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO MOUNT A TOP QUALITY, COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE OPERATION AGAINST US.

WHILE SEARCH AND RESCUE IS STILL OUR FIRST PRIORITY, TO COUNTERACT THE MARITIME THREAT, THE COAST GUARD HAS REALIGNED OTHER PRIORITIES ON THE WEST COAST. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FISHERIES OPERATIONS ARE STILL CONDUCTED AS PART OF OUR MULTI-MISSION PATROLS, BUT THERE IS A NEW EMPHASIS TO MAINTAIN AROUND-THE-CLOCK DETECTION AND SURVEILLANCE OFF OUR COAST AND TO BOARD ALL SUSPECT VESSELS. DETECTION ON THE OPEN OCEAN IS A VERY DIFFICULT TASK AND BEST ACCOMPLISHED BY AIRCRAFT. FOR OFFSHORE PATROLS WE USE COAST GUARD AIRCRAFT OUT OF SACRAMENTO, SAN DIEGO, AND LOS ANGELES. OUR AIRCRAFT HAVE TEAMED UP WITH NAVY E-2 AIRCRAFT FOR LARGE AREA SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS. WITH AN E-2 FLYING AT HIGH ALTITUDE FOR MAXIMUM RADAR RANGE, OUR AIRCRAFT CAN

BE VECTORED IN FOR LOW IDENTIFICATION PASSES. NEAR SHORE  
DETECTION AND SURVEILLANCE IS DONE MAINLY BY HELICOPTERS FROM OUR  
AIR STATIONS OR ON BOARD OUR LARGER PATROLLING CUTTERS. IF A  
SUSPECT VESSEL IS SPOTTED, WE INTERCEPT AND BOARD IT WITH ONE OF  
OUR CUTTERS. WE USUALLY HAVE AT LEAST TWO HELICOPTER EQUIPPED  
CUTTERS PATROLLING THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST. WE HAVE NINE  
82-FOOT COASTAL PATROL CUTTERS MAKING FREQUENT 3 DAY PATROLS  
ALONG THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COASTLINE IN ADDITION TO CONSTANT  
SURVEILLANCE AND HARBOR OPERATIONS WHILE ON DAILY LOCAL PATROLS.  
WE ALSO HAVE A LARGE NUMBER OF SMALL BOATS THAT ARE CONSTANTLY  
OPERATING IN OUR HARBORS AND MARINAS. OUR DISTRICT'S BUOY TENDER  
ALSO CARRIES OUT ALL OF THE ABOVE DETECTION AND SURVEILLANCE  
ACTIVITIES WHILE SERVICING OUR COASTAL AND HARBOR NAVIGATIONAL  
AIDS. ICE BREAKERS ON OCCASION TRANSIT TO AND FROM ANTARCTICA  
ALONG THE CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN COASTS, KEEPING A VIGILANT  
WATCH FOR KNOWN SUSPECT VESSELS.

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER OF 18 DECEMBER 1985, I HAVE ATTACHED A  
5 YEAR SUMMARY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS IN THIS DISTRICT AND  
DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARIES OF SIGNIFICANT INTERDICTION CASES DURING  
THE PAST TWO YEARS. THE STATISTICS DO NOT INCLUDE U.S. NAVY  
OPERATIONS WITH COAST GUARD LAW ENFORCEMENT DETACHMENTS ON BOARD.

ALTHOUGH THE COAST GUARD INTELLIGENCE STAFF IS SOMEWHAT LIMITED  
IN THE 11TH DISTRICT, WE DO HAVE ONE COAST GUARD INTELLIGENCE  
SPECIAL AGENT ASSIGNED TO THE DEA IN SAN DIEGO, AND THREE SPECIAL  
AGENTS OUT OF LONG BEACH WHO WORK DRUG INTELLIGENCE PART TIME

WITH LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS. HOWEVER, WE OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INTELLIGENCE BY WORKING ACTIVELY WITH EPIC, NNBIS, THE LOS ANGELES AND SAN DIEGO OCDTFs, CUSTOMS AND FBI DRUG INTELLIGENCE UNITS, WSIN AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL DRUG TASK FORCES. WE ARE ALSO WORKING WITH MEXICAN, CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN AGENCIES THROUGH COAST GUARD, DEA AND CUSTOMS CHANNELS.

I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPAND AND BUILD ON THESE COAST GUARD EFFORTS AS THE PACIFIC REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF NNBIS. WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE OUR DOORS OPENED TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO. I AM PROVIDING SEPARATELY A LISTING OF JUST SOME OF THE HELP AND SUPPORT THAT WE HAVE GIVEN TO LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES SINCE 1983. MUCH OF THIS SUPPORT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF OUR SEVEN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LIAISON PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE NNBIS REGIONAL CENTER. THEY HAVE OBTAINED EVERYTHING FROM ARMY GROUND SENSORS FOR SUSPECTED OFF-LOADING SITES AND A PORTABLE WATER TANK FOR A REMOTE CUSTOMS DESERT RADAR SITE, TO AIR FORCE B-52 SEARCH FLIGHTS FOR A SUSPECTED MOTHER SHIP, TO THE DIVERSION OF A NAVY DESTROYER TO HELP THE COAST GUARD KEEP AN OCEAN TUG AFLOAT, THAT SMUGGLERS TRIED TO SINK WITH ITS CONTRABAND. WHAT WE ATTEMPT TO DO IS WORK BEHIND THE SCENES TO SUPPORT AGENCIES THAT HAVE OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. WE ACCOMPLISH THIS BY OBTAINING RESOURCES THEY NEED, BY FACILITATING EXCHANGE OF INTELLIGENCE, AND BY ENCOURAGING COORDINATION WHEN MORE THAN ONE AGENCY IS INVOLVED.

NNBIS INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION IS ATTAINED THROUGH THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF ALL THE AGENCIES INVOLVED, INCLUDING DEA, USCS, FBI, ATF, CG, INS, WSIN AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. THROUGH THE ACCESS OF THESE MEMBERS TO THEIR OWN AGENCY INFORMATION, NNBIS HAS BETTER ANTICIPATED AND SUPPORTED INTERDICTION OPERATIONS. A RECENT NNBIS INITIATIVE IS A TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK LINKING ALL OF THE STATE AND MOST OF THE KEY LOCAL NARCOTICS LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ON THE WEST COAST, FROM ANCHORAGE, AK TO SAN DIEGO, CA AND INCLUDING HONOLULU, HI. SMALL, INEXPENSIVE PORTABLE COMPUTERS ARE BEING USED AND THE NETWORK LINKS AND MAINFRAME COMPUTER SUPPORT ARE BEING LEASED. THE NET IS NOT A DATA BASE; RATHER IT ALLOWS NARCOTICS INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS ALONG THE ENTIRE WEST COAST TO CONFER THREE TIMES A WEEK TO PASS INFORMATION AND MAKE INFORMAL INQUIRIES. BESIDES SUPPORTING THE NET, NNBIS IS PROVIDING A LOOKOUT LIST OF CURRENT ACTIVE WEST COAST SMUGGLING VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT. BY GETTING THIS LOOKOUT LIST TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ALONG THE WEST COAST, WE HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED THE EFFECTIVE SURVEILLANCE ASSETS. TO MANY OF THESE AGENCIES, IT MEANS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PASSING BY A SMUGGLER WITHOUT KNOWING IT, AND MAKING THE ARREST. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT ALERTS LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SITUATIONS WHEN BOARDING A VESSEL OR CHECKING AN AIRCRAFT.

AS YOU CAN SEE, MOST OF OUR EFFORTS, BOTH COAST GUARD AND NNBIS, ARE DIRECTED TOWARD INTERDICTION. HOWEVER, THIS IS ONLY ONE PART OF THE PRESIDENT'S OVERALL STRATEGY. EQUALLY IMPORTANT EFFORTS

ARE ALSO UNDERWAY BY OTHER AGENCIES TO CARRY OUT THE OTHER PARTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION OF DRUG ABUSE AND DRUG TRAFFICKING, NAMELY:

DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION THROUGH AWARENESS AND ACTION

DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO CONTROL NARCOTICS

MEDICAL DETOXIFICATION AND TREATMENT, AND

RESEARCH DIRECTED AT CAUSES, TREATMENTS AND UNDERSTANDING.

THIS CONCLUDES MY STATEMENT. I WILL BE PLEASED TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS THE COMMITTEE MAY HAVE.