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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Des Moines, Iowa)

For Immediate Release

December 8, 1989

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL
ANTIDRUG RALLY

John F. Kennedy High School
Denver, Colorado

1:27 P.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you, Pat, very much. And to the Governor of this state, thank you, sir, for welcoming me back. Governor Romer. To our Congressman whose district we are, my friend, Dan Schaefer, thank you, sir, for being with us over here. (Applause.) You've heard from our Drug Czar, Bill Bennett, who's doing a marvelous job fighting the narcotics scourge all across this country. (Applause.)

I wanted to thank Superintendent Koeppel, but I also wanted to pay my respect to the marshal of enthusiasm -- she who leads this school as principal, Bernadette Seick -- thank you for that wonderful welcome. (Applause.)

And, of course, to all of Denver's choice for number one anywhere at anytime, the Broncs, I want to say, Dan Reeves and John Beak, and Randy, Randy Gradishar, and President of that Denver Broncos Youth Foundation -- to Tony Dorsett -- (applause) -- and Andrew Provence -- (applause) -- and Billy Bryan and Randy Thornton. (Applause.) I want to thank all of them for being here.

I understand that your soccer team, if you'll pardon the pun, has a commanding lead. (Applause.) Dan Reeves has his scouts out, wondering if any of these guys would be any good at field goals. But, you know, whenever I fly over this part of the country on Air Force One, I'm always impressed, obviously, by the beauty of the Rockies -- grey peaks, green forests, sun. (Applause.) And in springtime, fantastic. And so you were lucky to be so close, so much a part of one of the most beautiful places on Earth -- this great State of Colorado. (Applause.)

And from Pike's Peak, to our south, right on up to the shadow of Longs Peak, the thrill of the Front Range is ever-present.

But you know, when you think of it, the greatest thrill in this world comes from the realization of a great ambition. It's the kind that a mountain climber knows when scaling that last rocky ledge to finally reach the summit. And this is the thrill that these gentlemen know -- to be a Bronco, to inspire more consecutive sell-out games than any other team in the history of the National Football League. (Applause.)

But my point is this -- my point is simply this -- such a moment has to be earned. It's as Montel Williams says, that if you want to be "fresh," you must first be "fresh" with your mind.

But the sad truth is that some people think you can get these same feelings of achievement without waiting, without striving, without doing much of anything at all. And they think all you need to do to feel like a winner is to smoke, or snort, or swallow a dose of drugs. But the drug high is only a sensation, not a fact; only for a minute, not a lifetime. And it is that simple, and it is that dangerous.

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For in that short time, the very ground beneath your feet is slipping away, opening up. And into that narrow grave you can bury your hopes, your dreams, and perhaps your very life.

And even if you don't pay the price today, rest assured, someone else will. Some people just think of themselves as peer group casual users. But there's nothing casual about buying drugs from people who consider killing to be a cost of doing business. Ask any policeman -- and God bless them -- any policeman here in Denver about the Crips and the Bloods. (Applause.) And watch the news from Colombia to our south. And you put it together: Every dollar spent on drugs is a dollar spent on death. (Applause.)

And let us then send a message to the merchants of death, called those pushers: We have new tools at our disposal to defeat you. And we are going to defeat you. (Applause.)

Let me tell you about a new law -- a new law that allows the Department of Justice to seize the assets of these drug kingpins and distribute the proceeds among law enforcement agencies.

A simple traffic stop by a Lakewood, Colorado, policeman in 1981 resulted in the cracking of a major cocaine cartel -- and the seizure of a small fortune. So I'm happy to say that in just a moment from now, I will present five checks totaling \$2,196,951 to these local authorities -- (applause.) Take that money, give it to the local authorities who participated in the investigation -- the police departments of Lakewood, Greenwood and Aurora, and the sheriff's office of Jefferson and Arapahoe Counties.

So only in this narrow way -- I will concede -- but only in this narrow way, crime pays. It pays for more stringent law enforcement. And criminals pay with a hefty chunk of their lives -- in this case with 20 years imprisonment. And in some cases, they will pay with their very lives.

And we can do even more -- we've got to -- much more -- to fight drugs. I sent a crime package to the Congress in May. Summer passed and fall passed. And now another winter will pass in Washington before new tough legislation is considered. But I am going to keep on fighting. We owe it to every kid at Kennedy to pass that kind of legislation. (Applause.) Crime is a number one concern of our nation. I call on the United States Congress today to make our crime package of one of its first orders of business when it reconvenes in January.

Your school is experiencing many of the same problems as every other school in America. That's why I came here today to introduce you to the Denver Broncos Youth Foundation. Because I do believe you can be Commanders in the war on drugs. (Applause.) Listen to them and learn from them. And they'll teach you how to avoid drugs for the rest of your life. And after all, drugs may get by a lot of people; but nothing can get by the Orange Crush. (Applause.)

The most important tactics, I'm told, that they teach are called "refusal skills." Perhaps you're under peer pressure to use drugs; fit in with some certain group out there. So you need to be able to do more than just say no. You need to have the confidence to look your false friends in the eyes, and say "hell, no, I don't want any of that." (Applause.)

I'll bet every one of you can tell me a tale of what you've seen firsthand and what drugs can do to your fellow students. And if someone you know is using drugs, then be a decent friend to the guy. Help him. Talk to him. Talk to her. Just ask your friend to take the problem home. And if that doesn't work -- to a counselor or to the church or somewhere, or to Randy here, and his people. But do something; don't just sit there. Help your friend. Take your friend to someone who will listen.

We're not going to get rid of drugs overnight in this country. But I believe that by working together, with the good people affiliated with this marvelous Denver Broncos Youth Association, you will one day get the drugs out of Denver. (Applause.)

I know you live in tough times -- and certainly that your life isn't simply. But that's why we want your help and your thoughts. And if you have an idea to fight drugs, let's hear it. If you have a plan, share it -- with your community leaders and your local officials, or with your Governor, who is waging a strong fight. And with our Drug Czar, Bill Bennett. Believe me -- an individual can make a difference.

Randy says that winning takes teamwork. Well, in the field and in life, that's true -- teamwork means being of one mind, one spirit, agreeing to one purpose. And our purpose is to get rid of drugs in America once and for all. (Applause.)

Your blue and kelly-green banner is an emblem of pride. Let it also be an emblem of a drug-free school, the home of true Commanders.

I came here to thank you, pay my respects to your great faculty, to your principal, to your superintendent, and most of all, to you who are engaged in this fight. (Applause.) And now I want you to witness government, perhaps close to its best, as I present to these local law enforcement officers the money that I was talking about that comes from the heroic fight they are waging to protect the life of every kid in this school. It's going to be my pleasure to present the checks to them. (Applause.)

END

1:39 P.M. MST