

[Starting at 00:00:04]

Laurie Baty: I am Laurie Baty. I am the new director of the DEA Museum, here at headquarters, and I want to offer you a warm and for those of you who are local, a hot welcome this morning to our spring lecture. I think it's going to be 80 or 85 today outside. So therefore, the hot welcome.

Somebody is being very slow. I am supposed to have my cell phone ring to make Sean unhappy. [Phone ringing] There we go. Mom, I can't talk now. That is the reminder for you to turn off or vibrate, or silence your phones, please. After Jeff's talk, we will open the floor to Q & A, but more on that later. I don't want you to have to remember all that for an hour. Our guest speaker today, who many of you may know, is retired special agent Jeff Stamm **[00:01:00]**. I could go over his entire 31-year career here at DEA, but I wanted to leave time for him to talk today.

Suffice it to say that after starting his law enforcement career in 1979 as a deputy sheriff with the Sacramento County Sheriff's department, he saw the light and in 1984, became a special agent with DEA. During his 31 years with us, Jeff rose through the ranks, eventually coming to headquarters as the Deputy Chief of International Operations. When he retired, he was the special agent in charge of our global aviation division. Jeff is the recipient of numerous awards, and that would take at least 30 minutes to do, I think, on their own. He lectures widely and what I thought was really interesting was in 2003, he was the principal US presenter on Afghan heroin at the G8 Summit in Paris.

Jeff currently serves as the Executive Director of the Midwest **[00:02:00]** HIDTA. Finally, Jeff is the author of *On Dope: A Passionate and Scholarly Argument for Maintaining Strong Drug Law Enforcement Practices throughout the Nation*. Jeff Stamm.

(Applause)

Jeff Stamm: Laurie, thank you so much for that generous introduction. I want to clarify one point. When I started my law enforcement career in 1979, I was 10 years old, so ... I am absolutely thrilled to be back here at DEA Headquarters with such a great group of people. For the record, I don't believe that there is a greater group of professionals, of warrior-servants than the folks here in DEA. Whatever your job series, whatever your function in this organization, you are all the modern version of what G. K. Chesterton referred to as today's unsleeping sentinels who guard the outposts of society **[00:03:00]**.

I am honored to be here to not just talk about my perspectives from 31 years in DEA or as the HIDTA director, but also to talk a little bit about the perspectives I gained in my research and writing my book, *On Dope, Drug Enforcement and the First Policeman*. It's not a book like many would expect. It's not a memoir. It's not

about a particular case or even an organization. It's about why we fight this battle, and why we must continue to fight for our future, for our children.

I wrote it to attempt to distill and apply the arguments and experiences of a whole bunch of other people, smarter than I am, why we must continue to enforce the federal drug laws of this nation. The great American writer Flannery O'Connor once said that you have to push back just as hard against the age that pushes against you. With that in mind, my two principles for writing *On Dope* [00:04:00] was to push back against this ubiquitous false narrative that the war on drugs is lost, or that it's been fought in completely the wrong way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The second reason and probably more important for this audience here today is given the history of this great organization, my intent was to write a preemptive defense of what surely would be the next hostile takeover or attempt to kill DEA. So let me start with a quick story, if I may, on September 11th, 2001. I was the regional counterdrug attaché, assigned to Islamabad, Pakistan. As you can imagine, 9/11 didn't just change the world, it completely refocused mine. At the time, the only US government agency that had any human intelligence inside [00:05:00] Afghanistan was DEA. So we were actually very uniquely poised to provide some outside's contributions on a larger war against terror, and we actually did.

In December of 2001, 17 days after the introduction of US Ground Forces, Kabul, the capital city fell to the US Military with some help from the Northern Alliance. Three days later, a company of Marines re-established that postage stamp sized lot in the middle of Kabul that used to be our US embassy. An embassy, by the way, that had been closed since 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. How is that for the arc of history?

So, at that time, the US ambassador in Pakistan asked if I would be willing to jump in with a small group of civilians to re-open, to reestablish the US embassy there, in Kabul [00:06:00]. Well of course, I jumped at the chance and found myself on a military transport that very night. When I got there, I found a company of Marines that had established a perimeter. Machine gun and more room placements on the roof of the old chancery building, and I was shown my sleeping arrangements, which was on the floor, right next to my new best friends from the Marines, in that building.

Now it's important to note that probably since 1979, the windows had been shot out or blown out, or broken out by Taliban or Russians, who knows, and birds had been flying in and out of the building for over two decades, nesting in the ceiling, and making a mess on the floor to the tune of about a quarter of an inch thick. My bedroom floor, but it was out of the wind, out of the rain, out of straight gunfire. So, I rolled out my poncho liner, my sleeping bag, set up my SAT phone, my MREs, and I called it [00:07:00] home for the next couple of weeks.

Now, it was on that very trip that I discovered something very important. I discovered what that white stuff in bird poop is. Do you know what that is? That's pretty much freaking bird poop too. Now, I tell that story just to illustrate the point that sometimes things are just as they seem. Instead of looking at things through a prism of nuance or cultural and moral relativism, sometimes things really are just about black and white, right and wrong, good and evil.

Drug trafficking and abuse is unquestionably one of those things. Former US Attorney Andrew McCarthy once remarked that civilization does not come about, nor does it survive by accident. It must be defended. It must be upheld by those committed to civility, decency, and adherence to the law. Our society, our civilization is not some naturally occurring evolution [00:08:00], but it's actually the imposition of human good over human evil. As we know, the good requires constant reinforcement. Or, as the bad needs only permission.

Nobody understands better than all of you in this room that we are never going to police our way or rest our way out of the drug issue. Law enforcement has been saying so for decades, but here is that two-sided coin that critics of the so-called war on drugs never mention, and that is that we're never going to control drug trafficking and abuse without the law enforcement component.

The institution of law enforcement, as we know, there is an immense responsibility for building and maintaining trust with a community, but we should also never forget that the community shares in that responsibility too.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are in danger of losing the debate against the illegal drugs. Dope. In the process, our very [00:09:00] society. Not because of the inherent correctness of the arguments and opinions of those who advocate drug legalization or decriminalization, but due to the near complete lack of an informed and engaged citizenry, pushing back against the demagogues, the apologists and the appeasers who peddle with increasing success, unfortunately, only dangerous myths and false metaphors.

The reckless and illegitimate accusations that the drug war has not only failed but that it's patently racist and oppressive have served to bully and confuse a sleepwalking population to timid and self-absorbed argue. In our attempt to be tolerant and sensitive, we instead exhibit a stultifying weakness in the face of a zealous and committed pro-dope cabal, intent upon changing the landscape and the laws. Allowing them to succeed will produce catastrophic social and cultural consequences [00:10:00] that will take generations, or longer, from which to recover.

We seemingly have seeded the playing field to so called experts like Brad Pitt, who calls the drug war a charade, simply because he can land in any American city and within 24 hours, buy whatever you need, or Richard Branson, who calls

the drug war a failure because America, he believes, now runs a police and prison state. Well even Time Magazine described Sir Richard Branson as a man filled with too much hubris, too much hucksterism and too little knowledge. Then of course, Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico, who claims that drug war is useless, because as he says, his country Mexico has paid an undue price being sandwiched between producer and consumer nations.

Now with all the respect to Senior Fox, not only is Mexico a drug producing nation [00:11:00], it is the principal drug producing nation in terms of methamphetamine, marijuana, heroin, and increasingly fentanyl that not only supplies the US, but increasingly the world. As far as being a drug consumer nation, actually many of Mexico's largest cities now rival their American counterparts in terms of drug use and addiction.

What all of these so-called self-anointed experts count on is something that's been described as pandemic public ignorance, or worse, simply an indifference to reality, through what has become something of a forced compulsion to non-judgmentalism and pervasive compassion, we are increasingly surrendering to the false hopes of both utopian liberals and fundamentalist libertarians who preach that drug prohibition does more harm than good, or that drug use affects no one but the user himself [00:12:00]. Such views are not only utterly wrong but destructive and fundamentally incompatible with a free and democratic society.

It is quite simply, to use a highly academic term that I discovered in my research, BS. Now, I use the contraction of that word in the interest of the quorum here in this federal building, but I actually mean that seriously. Many years ago, philosophy professor Harry G. Frankfurt from Princeton University wrote an obscure but penetratingly scholarly paper called "On BS," that attempted to analyze the social consequences of a diminishing lack of respect for truth in our culture.

"The BS," he writes, "Does not reject the authority of the truth as the liar does in and oppose himself to it. He simply pays no attention to it at all in his quest for some political power. By virtue of this, BS is a greater enemy of truth than lies are." Frankfurt further clarifies [00:13:00] and defines BS, and I want to make sure I don't slip, as simply an indifference to how things are. Thus the danger to society lies precisely in this indifference. Disregard for truth is insignificant, is trivial, and is irrelevant. Frankfurt's treatment of a vulgar yet ubiquitous expression instructs that we should condemn BS'ers even more than liars, if we really care about the truth.

It's been said that you don't have to be a soldier to understand war, but it sure can help. Well so too is this true in the arena of drug enforcement. Criminologist James Inciardi has argued that at least every now and then, those who wish to lecture us the most about the drug issue ought to leave their safe, secure and existentially antiseptic confines and visit the mean and despairing streets to

understand the scope and the solemnity of this problem [00:14:00].

Indeed, anyone who has had the slightest acquaintance with the unprecedented human carnage brought about by the allure of crack-cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, new potent strains of marijuana, misused opioids or any number of other substances, misused for cheap pleasures understands the pernicious and insidious decay that dope spawns in both the user and society. Most experts promoting a bold or compassionate solution, well-meaning, as they may be, usually possess no expertise whatsoever. They are a lot like Saddam Hussein, before of course he was introduced to 72 virgins by the world's finest military, who claimed some mantle of marshal prowess, simply owing to his authoritarian stature asked once about the dictator's supposed military expertise and US General Norman Schwartz replied that as far as Saddam Hussein being a great [00:15:00] military strategist, "He is neither a strategist, nor is he schooled in the operational art. Nor is he a tactician, nor is he a general. Nor is he even a soldier. Other than that, yes, he is a great military expert."

Those who stridently demand an end to the so-called war on drugs exhibit remarkable ignorance. They also reveal an arrogant and casual disregard for both the user and our society. In order to pander to a temporary and spacious desire by a selfish minority, intent only upon exercising rights, divorced from any corresponding duties.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no war on drugs. There never has been. The term has actually become a cajole, used to mock and condemn any law enforcement attempt to protect the public. It derives from President Richard Nixon's special message to Congress on drug abuse prevention and [00:16:00], delivered in 1971, and was designed as a metaphor to galvanize and unify our nation against an alarming social problem.

"If we cannot destroy the drug menace in America," Nixon communicated, "Then it will surely destroy us," and he called for a full scale attack on the problem of drug abuse in America. Of course, the overwhelming drug at that time was heroin and like today, it threatened to decimate an entire generation of Americans. So Nixon began his so-called war against drugs with drug treatment as his foremost weapon. Recognizing the primacy of drug use as the main driver in all other drug-related harms, Nixon increased spending eight-fold within two years, consuming fully two thirds of the national drug control budget, and dwarfing monies allocated to supply side or enforcement programs [00:17:00] across the federal government.

Nixon and the nation would come to learn the limitations of government's ability to affect behavior through compassionate and therapeutic means. What did make a significant difference was a reduction in the availability of heroin, brought about through sustained law enforcement efforts against the Corsican Italian mafia, supplying the vast majority of heroin to Americans at that time, known as

the French Connection. Of course, other trafficking groups in the South Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Colombia and Mexico eventually filled the void. It was enforcement that staunched this nation's first heroin epidemic.

Critics constantly lament that we have spent one trillion dollars now over the course of Nixon's war on drugs with "nothing to show for it." Let's apply this same standard to another metaphorical war **[00:18:00]**, shall we? That's Lynden Johnson's war on poverty, began in 1965. We now spend one trillion dollars every single year on that war, and the poverty rate in this country has only increased. Where is the parity? Where is the criticism of that war?

We have come to vastly overestimate the effectiveness of drug prevention programs and keeping many of our young people off drugs. So too, in the treatment of what we have come to understand as a chronic relapsing condition. Drug users succumbing to their intense, endurable cravings is by far the most common outcome. In fact, following initial treatment, the relapse rate remains at a stubborn 90 to 95%. A recent Boston University study found that the mean number of drug treatment episodes was 6.9 times in a six and a half-year period before finally taking hold **[00:19:00]**. According to SAMHSA, across the entire spectrum of public and private funding sources, we now spend \$35 billion annually on drug treatment, and that figure has grown from \$9 billion in 1986.

During the same period of time, the federal government's assumption of those treatment costs has ballooned from 13% of that total to over one third today. How much more are we going to demand of the taxpayers if we rely only upon prevention and treatment as our default options, and how many will die? Ladies and gentlemen, for society at large, law enforcement is incontrovertibly the most effective and the most compassionate drug treatment and prevention program available to us today, and we should say so without apology.

Throughout our nation's one hundred-year struggle against **[00:20:00]** the struggle psychoactive drugs, beginning with the Harrison Narcotics Act in 1914, we have continuously sought a social and legal equilibrium between maximizing individual liberty and maintaining that essential requirement of public safety and order. Along the way, we have made mistakes. We have at times witnessed government missteps, but far more often, we have experienced tragedy and harm, produced by radical self-indulgence and human predation. Clearly, our drug control paradigm falls far short of complete success. It is however, like Winston Churchill's famous observation about democracy that it's the worst system ever devised by the wit of man, except for all the others.

The success of our drug policies, emulated throughout the world, by the way, is evidenced by the **[00:21:00]** long-term reductions in the drug use rates in this country. The percentage of persons, aged 12 and older, using an illegal drug in the past 30 days has decreased 38% from its peak in 1979, when over 14% of Americans were using one or more illicit substances, to just 9% today. Now this

may not be winning, but it sure as hell isn't losing.

Characterizing this as a failure is not only wrong, it intends to grossly mislead and hoodwink sometimes an all too susceptible public. To completely scrap our current laws and policies, based only upon blind hope and sentimental audacity, in order to alleviate the supposed harms done by our prohibition of drugs would not simply be reckless, it would be suicidal. Especially, [00:22:00] if it were to be done on behalf of the mere 9% of our population, who seek only unlimited forms of self-gratification.

My book is not intended to provide a specific set of policy recommendations, designed to chart a pioneering way forward. Rather, it's intended to illustrate the complexities of this problem, complexities that don't lend themselves to clever, superficial responses that usually rooted in pre-existing ideologies reflect theories that many of the critics simply want to believe in, or worse, reflect theories that echo sort of a veiled contempt against the very authority that allows the critics to bask in their moral luxury of condemnation, while taking for granted the security that the very object of their contempt provides them.

We are made to believe that our prisons are filled with drug users [00:23:00] that mass incarceration has been spawned by the drug war. Folks, these aren't just misguided notions, they are dangerous lies. On any given day in our country, there are roughly 2.4 million people behind bars. Of that total, the vast majority are in our state prisons. Of that total, right at 16% are there for drug offences, drug trafficking offences, but that's not the number I want you to look at. I want you to look at the other half of that equation. Eighty-four percent of our inmates are there for rape, robbery, murder, grand larceny, aggravated assault. Ladies and gentlemen, our prisons are not filled with drug users, they are not even filled with drug traffickers. They are filled with violent criminals and serial thieves, and surely, they are where they belong.

One last point on that topic. Anybody who is in law enforcement for more than a week and a half realizes quite well [00:24:00] that with all of our available alternative sentencing programs across this vast and generous land, it's actually damn hard to find yourself in prison today. Ultimately, the crisis of dope is one that is deeply rooted in attitudes and behaviors, and therefore will require a citizenry that is not only committed to self-control, civility and mutual restraint, but also unafraid to confront those among us who infect and rot our nation from within. It will necessitate the reminding of our people often that freedom is important not only for doing what we want but also, and especially, for doing what we ought.

Quite simply, individual character and lawful behavior matter. They matter for self and cumulatively, they matter for society. If not, then as Edwin Delattre has warned, the country's resources will be exhausted [00:25:00] in efforts to save the citizens from themselves, whether or not narcotics are legalized.

We cannot just surrender to this modern epidemic. This is our country and it must be defended, and fight, we must, not simply with caring and compassion. Although these are important aspects to a range of reaction, but also with an aggressive and wide-ranging law enforcement response that upholds the rule of law and what is right against a constant onslaught of amoral predators who leave only human suffering and social decay in their never-ending pursuit of riches. To not target, arrest and imprison those who prey upon our fellow citizens, sometimes with unimaginable violence and barbarity would not only be cowardly, it would be grossly immoral.

America's law enforcers are not the bad guys. They perform the difficult and dangerous tasks that their democratically [00:26:00] elected legislators require them to do on our behalf. To blame them for our nation's drug problems is to misallocate responsibility in a fundamentally mistaken way.

The late sociologist James Q. Wilson was absolutely right in his discernment that sanctioning an individual drug addict may seem unjust or uncompassionate, but failing to do anything about an epidemic of crackheads, tweakers or junkies leads to social catastrophe. There is no magic bullet in our response to the dope threat. There will be no grand political fix. We are engaged not in a war but in a struggle, a hard, perpetual struggle, involving complex social, criminal and pharmacological forces pushing constantly and insidiously against the safety and well-being of our citizens.

In every society and in every time [00:27:00], there are people who are consistently good and others who are irretrievably wicked, but the vast majority of people fall within that large middle ground and their behavior is profoundly influenced by the moral environment of the time. That's why it's important that our laws, our popular culture, and most importantly our leadership reflect the virtuous expectations of our citizens, expectations that at bottom must include a sense of both self-control, as well as a degree of empathy for one's fellow citizens, what I call the first policemen.

The only long-term answer to controlling the drug contagion is that which is incontestably the hardest and that is shaping proper conduct among citizens. The epidemic of dope is constantly held in check by both the objective risk of punishment and the subjective sense of wrongdoing [00:28:00]. In addition to legal punishment, we must not shy away from demanding standards in our society. We must no longer be afraid to criticize and stigmatize behaviors that are dangerous and injurious to us all. It's time that we reclaim our culture and our civilization. It's time that we demand personal responsibility and the control of destructive impulses instead of excusing or medicalizing them. It's time that we regain the ability and the expectation to police ourselves. Something discarded and disparaged since the 1960s.

A good friend of mine, some of you may have heard of him, Jimmy Capra, former DEA Chief of Operations, was quite right to preach to his troops that every night in your city, there are parents praying that their children not get exposed to drugs. You can help be the answer to those prayers **[00:29:00]**. Well of course, Jimmy was speaking to narcs, those intrepid and overwhelmed souls, charged with enforcing our national and international drug laws, but the lesson applies to us all. Americans face a set of existential choices. We can continue to allow a polluted pop culture to accelerate our decay and raise our kids, or we can push back and fight for our families, our communities, and our nation. We can continue to be unchallenging of our nation's leaders at all levels in their pandering to proliferating groups of selfish and mercenary factions or we can demand accountability, and government's recognition of their role in the formation of character.

We can maintain our gutless silence against the peddlers of a limitless and lawless democracy, whose arguments are based in intellectual preening and self-applauding compassion or we can confidently **[00:30:00]** employ a thoughtful appreciation for traditions, laws and a kind of collective human wisdom, developed throughout time that man cannot indulge his every want and appetite, especially those that involve substances and ingestion methods, never seen before modern times.

Finally, in our long, hard struggle against dope, we can either growing numbers of people to put into their bodies whatever they wish and then police up the socially damaging consequences of them doing so, or we can work to develop strong and durable first policemen in the character of our citizens.

The freedoms that we enjoy today have taken centuries to establish, but can be pulled down in just a few short generations. What we decide as a nation to make of ourselves and our future matters greatly. In order to maintain a just, decent, tranquil **[00:31:00]**, tranquil and prosperous nation, it is time that we all take a stand against dope.

Now, what I'd like to do is spend a few minutes here talking about what ultimately became the longest chapter in my book, and that is the history of DEA, this great organization, what I refer to as the indispensable agency. Certainly, given the complexities of the predatory nature of the global drug industry, we long ago recognized the fact that we need a federal law enforcement agency that specialized in all aspects of the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs. In targeting, arresting and bringing to justice the most prolific drug trafficking organizations operating in the US and throughout the world, DEA would actually come to develop an investigative and intelligence-gathering potency far beyond their meager numbers and limited budget.

The agency came to symbolize **[00:32:00]** the highest levels of commitment, innovation, audacity and effectiveness in the simple performance of duty. A fact

that would cause them to be simultaneously feared and loathed by dope peddlers and respected and emulated by their police counterparts throughout the world.

Repeatedly scorned and terribly scarred, DEA has endured not only the outsized international challenges of ruthless and prolific drug trafficking groups, but also the recurrent political assaults upon its very survival. Yet, DEA has always risen not simply to meet the challenge, but to embrace it, outsmart it, outfight it, and persevere. Not simply to win some so-called supposed war, but to just do their level best in a constant obligatory struggle. Although as we know, **[00:33:00]** the country and the world is still gripped by the surge of drugs, tremendous successes have been achieved. As we know, the French Connection is no more. Pablo Escobar is dead. Carlos Laider remains in prison. The [inaudible 00:33:20] cartels are essentially extinct. Khun Sa's Golden Triangle heroin empire is no more. The largest Israeli organized crime Ecstasy Kingpins have been extradited and are serving time in the US. Many of Afghanistan's narco-terrorists have been ensnared and are no longer funding operations against the US forces. Scores of Mexican cartel figures and leaders have been either killed or captured, and domestic drug trafficking groups like the Hell's Angels and the Crypts and Bloods are mere husks of their former selves. All were relentlessly **[00:34:00]** targeted and pursued by DEA and its partners.

A Colombian national policeman once said that there are norms and parameters that the police have to obey, but when the adversary doesn't have to obey them, he has the advantage. He is absolutely right, but American law enforcement officers in general, and drug agents in particular, are intensely averse to sacrificing the hollowed institutional and political values that define us as a society. We are rightly unwilling to employ tactics, however more effective they might be that do not comport with our liberal democratic principles of constitutional loyalty and respect for liberty, and justice.

For the enforcers of our drug laws, adhering to such principles unquestionably handicaps their collective efforts, who habitually embrace barbarity **[00:35:00]** as a normal course of business. Yet, such legal and moral limitations are willingly endured, for they are undeniably what separate the guardians of civilization from the enemies within the gates. The cynical elites, the dilatants who reflexively and dogmatically mock the drug warriors for their inability to win some supposed war would do well to understand and remember this not so inconsequential nuance.

On February 15th 2011, ICE agent Jaime Zapata was killed in a brutal and premeditated manner by Zetas cartel in Mexico. In the immediate aftermath, Washington DC telegraphed such a prostrate and feeble reaction to such a naked act of aggression that our federal law enforcers, especially within ICE **[00:36:00]**, could only articulate a kind of bewildered and heartbreaking embarrassment at the lack of action or even outrage. At the time, the head of ICE telephoned DEA administrator Len Hart and timidly asked, "What should I do?" DEA still grieving and incensed, 26 years after the brutal kidnapping torture and

murder of their special agent, knew exactly what to do. Experience had taught something that had been seared into every DEA agent, even those who had yet to be born in 1985 that the good guys are obliged to respond to such an extraordinarily flagrant and profane violation of civilizational norms.

It has surely been no accident of history that 26 years have passed without any other purposeful targeting of American drug agents in Mexico. This has everything to do, of course, with the swift, massive **[00:37:00]** and unrelenting response brought to bear at that time by DEA, DOJ and the White House, which well taught successive generations of international traffickers how counterproductive such actions could be.

By the way, I think that for his leadership back in 1985, I think Jack Lawn continues to be widely regarded as the greatest administrator this agency has seen. Within one week of Agent Zapata's murder, DEA, not ICE, DEA planned, orchestrated and executed operation Bombardier, consisting of massive raids against the Zetas, not just throughout Mexico but across the US that answered the horrific criminal act with the full weight and imagination of the law. For the family of Special Agent Zapata, that day was **[00:38:00]** nothing less than the sublime and unambiguous application of the rule of law by the good guys, on behalf of justice and on behalf of civilization.

For those who have been to EPIC, you know that out-front stands a memorial to Enrique Camarena. There, you'll find a portion of a poem called The Colors, written by Nathalia Crane, which simply reads, "You cannot choose your battlefield. The gods do that for you, but you can plant a standard or a standard never flew."

Ladies and gentlemen, it is time we stop being mere spectators to our own downward destiny. It is time we set things right, to plant a standard, not just for Kiki but for us. To all of you in DEA who continue to be our unsleeping sentinels who guard the outposts of society, I salute you and I wish you **[00:39:00]** god speed in your continued work. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Laurie Baty: For those of you here, we have two mics. If you have a question, please raise your hand and we will get a mic to you. If you are watching on the web, there is a click question button, on the homepage, if I understand correctly. You can click that, pose your question and it will come to one of our staff, and it will be read for you. Questions and answers. Go right ahead.

Participant: Thank you very much for coming. Two questions. One is Carl Quintero is not presently in jail or dead. What would you suggest be done about that? You mentioned Kiki in particular, and he was responsible for his murder. The second question is **[00:40:00]**, you identified as an unequivocal success,

and I think correctly, that because of the response of DEA to the intentional targeting of a special agent that we haven't had that intentional targeting since. Whereas when we talk in general about the war on drugs or the fight against drug trafficking, the definition of success seems to be more ambiguous. When we've dedicated a lot of money and resources in the past, we've maybe slowed down the pace of drug use a bit, but we haven't really reversed it. What policy changes, specifically, would you suggest that we take in order to actually show a reverse and a decline in drug use in this country? Thank you.

Jeff Stamm: Thank you for that question. I don't think I could repeat it for those who didn't hear it, but the first half of that, I really can't state, being gone from DEA for a year and a half now, what specific actions were taken to find and arrest, and arrest Rafael Carl Quintero. I think the relationship that the DEA has with the Mexican authorities, from my understanding, is never better, believe it or not. However, the cops down there have such an uphill battle with the funding and the corruption, and the adversarial relationship that even some within their own government pose that it continues to be difficult.

To answer your second question, you heard me talk about it here. I think leadership is everything when it comes to drugs. There has been a lot of folks that have vilified and made fun of Nancy Reagan's Just Say No program years ago, but for those who have done some [00:42:00] research on the matter, it worked. Just Say No was not intended to impress our sophisticated elites in this country. It was intended to impress 12, 13 and 14 year-olds, and it worked surprisingly well.

For every drug epidemic we've had in this country, going back to 1914, there are two essential drivers, availability and acceptability. It's on that second front that we need to do better and letting folks know that drug use is unacceptable. It's something that maybe you can survive, but at large, it's something that society can't. So, without getting into specifics on policies and things of previous administration, I hope we now have some strong leadership on why drugs are wrong and why it's so damaging to society [00:43:00] at large.

Once again, whether it's powder cocaine, crack-cocaine, methamphetamine, and now our second wave of heroin, every time we see a new trend, it's not just availability being made by our international drug trafficking organizations, and domestic, it's the fact that they become somehow acceptable to certain segments of society. So, I think messaging is key.

Participant: Thank you very much for your important message. For people like myself who have worked with you for many years at DEA, we appreciate that. Could you give us a sense of on what you think the new administration's top priorities should be in the drug fight?

Jeff Stamm: I'll tell you what. Looking at all the trends and you folks know as

well as I do that they are all going the wrong way, not just marijuana for [00:44:00] kids, it's not just the opioid epidemic, but the Mexican cartels are pumping out cheap pure methamphetamine more than ever before. We can't continue to take our eye off the ball with all of these other problems, especially with cocaine about to come on strong again, just because we've got the bright shiny object here with opioids and heroin. Those are tremendous problems, but every heroin addict out there is not just a heroin user. For the most part, they are poly drug users and they've started with at least marijuana, if not other drugs.

So, we don't necessarily have a heroin problem, we have a drug problem, and we have to fight them all essentially equally, and once again, as I talked about, we can't continue to talk about [00:45:00] internationally, with our foreign counterparts that yes, we wouldn't have such a problem with drugs in the world if it weren't for Americans having that huge consumption problem, and then come home and do absolutely nothing about it. We have to make this struggle something that's stigmatized, again.

Stigma is actually much more important than law in keeping citizens in line with each other, to maximize liberty for all of us. So, although addiction requires our help and our compassion, there is a lot more folks out there that aren't drug addicts, they are recreational drug users, and we have to criticize and stigmatize that kind of behavior.

Participant: Jeff, thanks. Thanks for coming today [00:46:00]. When we talk about addiction, what we see today is China. I'd like to know your thoughts on that. We meet with Chinese delegations, they want to help. We want to help them, but make no mistake, it's a different world out there. We have Asians in the dark market. It's all cyber stuff and it's all mailed to somebody's house or post office box. What do you think about China and the flow of drugs coming from China? What are your thoughts on that?

Jeff Stamm: Let me enlarge that question just a bit, if I may. It's not just China that we have a problem with, but certainly, China poses some unique challenges right now, but even if we got control of China right now, I believe that Mexican chemists have already learned very well how to make fentanyl, carfentanil, or trimethyl fentanyl, whatever you need, they can make down there too [00:47:00], but whether it's that or whether it's coca cultivation in Columbia, I truly think that DEA has been given the responsibility, but not the necessary resources and ancillary support from the whole of government.

If we truly care about China's manufacture of drugs or Mexico's, or Colombia's, I think we need to engage larger pieces of the government, in trade, in immigration. Some of these truly whole of government approaches that allow us to get a handle on this and take a breath so that we can, in our own country, actually make a difference with drug trafficking here, but 4,500 agents in DEA, scattered throughout 88 country offices now, [00:48:00] I think the number is,

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226 domestic offices, we are tremendously outnumbered. We are out-budgeted. So, it's not just the law enforcement approach, it's a whole of government approach.

Before I retired from DEA, I came from Dallas, Texas and the former chief of police there, David Brown, following that horrific night where he lost five police officers in a brutal mass shooting, 12 others I believe wounded, he said something very profound that, "Every time we have a social problem, we ask the police to step forward and take care of that. Drugs is not a law enforcement problem. Drugs is a social, criminal and pharmacological problem." I truly believe law enforcement has done a great job. We all know that most people that go on a drug treatment are compelled to be there through [00:49:00] some encounter with law enforcement or drug testing, but this can't just be law enforcement's responsibility.

While we continue to allow our pop culture, as I talk about in the book too, to continuously churn the waters of temptation, and then blame DEA for not being able to get rid of the sharks.

Participant: All right, we have a question from a web viewer. What are some of the highlights of your career that you look back on fondly?

Jeff Stamm: What a great question. Something I wasn't prepared for [00:50:00]. I know this sounds like I am dodging the question, but I have never had a bad assignment in DEA, including Headquarters. I have said many times, especially when I became an ASAC and was talking to either third teams who were thinking about promoting one day or fourth teams on the cusp of coming to Headquarters, I said, when you go to Headquarters, you are going to leave one day but you are going to leave with two things. You are going to leave with a better understanding of this bureaucratic monster we call DEA, and that's going to make you a much better field person, but secondly and more importantly, you are going to get to work with a bunch of people you never knew existed. Some really, truly wonderful, committed people.

Because we are so scattered throughout the globe, we don't always get to work with the folks that you get to know, and I truly mean that there are no [00:51:00] greater committed, dedicated professionals than DEA.

One of the pleasures here today is just coming back to this home, this agency, and I still have not just fond memories of every place I've been but some great, great friends and people that continue to fight the good fight. Once again, I thank you for allowing me to be here with you today. I thank you for those who continue to fight the good fight, to fight the struggle. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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Laurie Baty: Thanks. While Catie is coming up, a little something from the DEA Educational Foundation to thank him [00:52:00]. Thank you. We are working on a fall-spring lecture series for the end of this year and the beginning of next year. Stay tuned and we will have topics announced shortly. Thank you all, and Jeff, thank you very much for your talk. Thank you.

(Applause)