

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 18, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR

HONORABLE JOHN N. MITCHELL  
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

As you know, enroute to and from the Brussels meeting on the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, I stopped over in Istanbul and Paris to discuss the problem of the heroin traffic with agents of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. You and I had discussed the possibility of getting into this subject via the new committee. However, the atmosphere in Brussels was not one in which to launch such a subject with any confidence, and I decided not to try. It may be once the committee is established and the concerns of the allies are somewhat allayed we can move into the area of law enforcement. But for the moment I return with the judgment that it is possible to launch a major initiative on the drug problem on a straight bi-lateral basis.

My impression would be that if the United States moves with energy and determination we could cripple the heroin traffic in the course of twelve to twenty-four months.

But first a caveat. It seems to me a useful practice in government to note when one is dealing with a problem government seems unable to solve. You may recall that long memorandum I sent you February 11 on the subject of organized crime. (I attach a copy, as I doubt you even saw it at the time.) I began by noting that the essential organizations either formed or became capitalized during prohibition. And added: "Thirty-five years and thirteen Attorney Generals later it would not appear that the United States government has brought about any serious diminution in the activities, far less the affluence of the criminal syndicates."

This is apparently especially true with respect to the heroin traffic, which has been largely in the hands of criminal syndicates. For a

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half century the Federal government has prohibited the traffic, but has been unable to enforce its prohibition. (I may also add it has frequently deluded itself on that point. Just after the 1964 election I made a big effort to persuade the administration to take on the subject seriously. A meeting was convened by Moyers, where the suggestion was shot down by Katzenbach who assured us that the traffic was just about dried up in New York City and really was coming under control. You may note he is now head of an emergency committee on the subject set up by Mayor Lindsay who demanded on Tuesday that the Federal government become more involved with the New York City problem.) The point is that government has failed. There must be a reason for this, although we don't know what it is. That being the case, it is necessary to approach any new effort with limited expectations of success. Nonetheless, I do think we may be in a position for a tremendous breakthrough.

My analysis rests on two points, which I take to be so elemental that we have not grasped their importance.

Point one. Heroin is grown in Turkey.

Something like 80-85% of the heroin entering the United States originates as opium in Anatolia, and processed into morphine in Turkey. This is not only the major source of heroin, but apparently one of the few possible sources for the high grade drug. Ergo: stop the growing of opium in Turkey.

Point two. Heroin is manufactured in France.

The Turkish morphine is apparently processed in small clandestine laboratories in the Marseilles area and transhipped to the United States. Ergo: close down the clandestine laboratories.

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I knew this well enough before my trip, but I return with a quite new conviction that the United States is in fact in a position to do both those things.

Opium growing is a classic peasant industry. The quality product is the work of intensive cultivation by small landowners pursuing an ancient art. The same process produces Swiss cheeses and Burgundy wines. If it were to cease, it would be hard to start up elsewhere. Someone would try, and it would happen, but the system would be seriously disrupted. And this is the point. As best I can tell Turkey has no intrinsic interest in the continued cultivation of the opium poppy. At present something like 110,000 licensed producers (sic) produce some 175 tons a year. In Ingersoll's estimate, about two-thirds of this goes into legal channels, producing some \$1.4 million in income. (And an actual loss to the government which supports the price.) The illicit remainder brings something like \$3 million. In round figures, \$50 a farm!

Surely the answer is simply to buy Turkey out of the business.

Some years ago we began an imaginative A.I.D. program to provide for crop substitution over a five-year period designed to put an end to opium production. They have accepted that goal in principle. However, as best I can tell they are nowhere near to closing down, and may never really do so unless we simultaneously make it worth their while to do so, and make it very much against their interests not to do so.

Obviously the Turkish economy (and the low level officialdom) benefit from the drug traffic at levels higher than the straight payments to farmers, but even so it is not a lot of money. There are a lot of things Turkey wants more.

The situation in France is somewhat different. Frenchmen clearly make fortunes out of heroin. But Paris doesn't benefit much, if at all, and it is Paris that makes decisions about such matters. Moreover, there have recently been a few deaths in France from overdoses of heroin, and the press has been making a national scandal of it all. So much that the Minister of the Interior made an announcement last week of additional forces, etc. (A relative term. They have 20 men working in narcotics. Lindsay on Tuesday asked you for an additional 600 in New York alone.) I accept the

French Sureté at face value: if they really wanted to close down the clandestine laboratories, I assume they could do so. Until now they have not wanted to do so, and the United States has made no serious effort to persuade them otherwise.

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What is needed is a major diplomatic initiative, accompanied by economic inducements, and if need be, sanctions designed to get Turkey and France out of the drug business.

The problem is, as I wrote to you in my memorandum of February 11, that the foreign policy establishment of the United States has never regarded the heroin traffic as serious. But it is serious. It has become a threat to the social stability of the United States. I am convinced the State Department can be made to see this, if the President so desires. What we must do, as I wrote February 11, is "to make clear to the governments involved that in our view to acquiesce in the traffic is to be an accomplice to it, and that henceforth we will regard this as a hostile act." By which I mean hostile: that which is rarely forgiven, never ignored: that which normally brings immediate retaliation.

I envisage a process somewhat as follows: A high level, confidential mission should be sent by the President of the United States to the Presidents of Turkey and France. This should be a friendly mission, the ultimate object of which would be an exchange of letters announcing new arrangements that will make everyone look good. The mission should come prepared with offers of cash assistance to the Turks, and maybe even to the French, but also with the message from the President that we are deadly in earnest. The details of the arrangements to be proposed are obviously best worked out between the Department of Justice and the Department of State. Once done, it can be put before the President.

Several final points.

While in Istanbul I was summoned to see the Foreign Minister, Ihsan Sabri Caglayangil. We had a long, cordial meeting designed mostly,

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I gather, to send assurances to the President the regime really does want to stay with the West, and that those in opposition are a tiny minority. (Who knows?) He did hope nothing happened at NATO that would give rise to charges of interference in internal affairs -- at least until the election on October 12.

I met with two of your agents, Salmi in Turkey, Cusack in Paris. Both splendid men.

Lastly, I would offer the thought that if we do not disrupt the heroin traffic now, it is likely shortly to drift into the hands of middle-class Americans, and may become unstoppable.



Daniel P. Moynihan  
Assistant to the President

Attachment - Xerox Copy Memo to the Attorney General, Feb 11, 1969, from Mr Moynihan, re crime situation

DPM/crm

bcc: John Ehrlichman  
Chris Miller (file)  
Central Files

*✓ Col. Haig*