

Meese's Ambitious War Against U.S. Drug Abuse Is Faltering as Cocaine Use Continues to Spread

By ANDY PASZTOR
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—Above everything else, Attorney General Edwin Meese wants to be remembered for leading the first all-out, successful drive against drug abuse, says FBI Director William Webster.

If he can succeed in this fight, "that could be his greatest legacy," says the chief of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

But, recent evidence suggests that ambitious goal is quickly slipping out of reach. Many critics, local drug enforcement officials and even the Justice Department's own studies indicate that the Reagan administration is losing ground steadily in its battle against cocaine and other dangerous drugs. Despite record arrests and seizures, a Drug Enforcement Administration report warned only a few



Edwin Meese

weeks ago that more cocaine is being smuggled into this country than ever before, while street prices either remain steady or have dropped.

Meanwhile, the U.S. appetite for cocaine seems insatiable, according to DEA officials, who see sharply increased use among young professionals, students and many other groups. Government experts estimate that about one out of 10 Americans already has experimented with the drug; and they forecast that by the end of this year, 20% of all high school students will have tried cocaine at least once.

The latest data also suggest that such setbacks are likely to hamper the Justice Department's overall campaign against other drugs, regardless of changing federal policies or Mr. Meese's optimistic assertions of "encouraging progress." The DEA says "marijuana consumption trends (in the U.S.) aren't expected to change in the near term," and increased imports of heroin "are projected from Southwest Asia" in the next few years.

Hubert Williams, former police director of Newark, N.J., and head of the nonpartisan Police Foundation, claims the federal crackdown is "merely changing the mix and the distribution methods" used for ille-

gal narcotics. "It simply isn't stopping the stuff from coming into this country," he argues, because "the amount of money to be made is so enormous."

Most experts agree that dampening the "demand side" of the drug equation may be the most important—but also the most difficult—task facing the government. "The bottom-line resolution of our problem is education and prevention," asserts Francis Mullen, the recently retired head of the DEA, who helped draft many of the programs currently under way. In candid moments, Mr. Meese acknowledges that what he is seeking, in fact, amounts to a fundamental reshaping of social attitudes.

Responding to questions about the legacy he would like to leave behind, the attorney general talks almost wistfully about creating a climate "in which drug abuse is considered little more than slow suicide, rather than the socially 'in' thing to do."

\$110 Billion Drug Tab
But today, the results of many surveys and drug-use reports point in the opposite direction. Overall, federal officials estimate U.S. citizens are spending as much as \$110 billion a year to buy illegal narcotics and pills, and the total is climbing by 10% or more annually.

Anticipating congressional resistance to major budget increases for the war on drugs, Reagan administration officials are expecting foreign governments to assume a larger role. "The shift may be somewhat subtle, but the new signals to our allies and friends are definitely intended to produce action," says a senior Justice Department official responsible for overseeing drug investigations. "The excuses and delays of the past won't be acceptable any longer."

Last September, the State Department put out a report accusing most of the major drug-producing countries of renegeing on promises to destroy profitable marijuana, coca or opium-poppo crops, prompting stepped-up congressional demands to cut off U.S. aid. A few weeks ago, senior Justice Department officials and Mexico's attorney general agreed to work together to develop an "international database" designed to track the movement of large drug shipments and narcotics rings.

Texas-Mexico Border
And just last Friday, President Reagan and his Mexican counterpart, President Miguel de la Madrid, reiterated the resolve of both countries to jointly pursue shipments of illicit drugs and drug profits across the Texas-Mexico border.

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration advocates legislation in the U.S. offering hefty cash rewards for anyone who provides information leading to the prosecution of selected, big-name foreign drug traffickers.

Mr. Meese and some of his top aides are also talking about getting the United Nations more involved in anti-drug programs. In a speech last fall to American business executives involved in drug rehabilitation programs, the attorney general spelled out the extent of his concern over what he often refers to as the "scourge" of drug abuse.

'Babel of Voices'
"No nation can long sustain the casualties we are suffering in terms of lives, health, productivity, wealth, crime and morality," the attorney general warned the executives, urging them to "sound a message of reason through the babel of voices competing" for the attention of young Americans.

Still, some veteran prosecutors worry that it's proving more difficult than anyone expected to win the skirmishes, let alone the entire war, against smugglers. Rudolph Giuliani, the U.S. attorney in Manhattan who previously, as an associate at-

Higher Taxes Not Needed, City Leaders Say in Poll

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON — A majority of elected officials from 371 cities believe they can maintain or expand municipal services without increasing taxes this year, a trade group survey found.

The National League of Cities poll showed that officials from 62% of the cities don't think a tax increase will be necessary despite the threat of further cuts in federal aid. The municipal leaders, however, rated the loss of federal aid as their greatest local budget concern this year.

But league staff members cautioned against misreading the annual survey of cities' economic conditions. "Federal aid to cities has been cut in half or better over the last few years," Alan Beals, the group's executive director, said at a news conference. To compensate, he said, "cities have increased taxes at the local level by 50% in the last five years," and many have reached taxation limits set by the states.

Mr. Beals also said most cities already have cut nonessential services. In addition, the officials said they expect less robust economic activity in the cities this year. They reported significant improvements last year in only two of 16 economic areas: mortgage conditions and interest rates for local borrowing.

torney general, helped draft the government's anti-drug strategy, argues that millions of middle-class, "recreational" cocaine users "create a runaway, impossible problem for law enforcement to deal with."

When he prosecutes a big cocaine dealer, Mr. Giuliani says, "I don't fool myself into thinking it will have a major impact on the street." Rather, he says, such prosecutions "serve to illustrate the problem, or keep it in front of the public."

Automatix 1 GM Option

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

BILLERICA, MASS.

said it will extend indefinitely its option to buy shares for \$10 a share of whichever is lower. The option expires Jan. 1.

Automatix said that it intend the option. John J. Dent, finance, at Automatix, the company it wanted to acquire and Exchange completed an investigation of the sale. Those results were widely because a European misstated sales.

In national over-the-counter market yesterday, Automatix closed at \$4.25.

U.S., Industry Urged to Spend \$5 Billion On Technologies for Reducing Acid Rain

By ROBERT E. TAYLOR
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Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Special U.S. and Canadian envoys proposed that the U.S. government and industry spend \$5 billion over five years to reduce acid rain by finding cleaner technologies for burning coal.

The proposal, which didn't include specific targets for reducing U.S. emissions of sulfur dioxide, drew complaints from environmentalists, Reagan administration officials and lawmakers.

When presidential envoy Drew Lewis told Budget Director James Miller about the plan, Mr. Miller responded: "Where are we going to get the money?"

Administration officials said in Washington that they hadn't seen the proposal before it was presented to President Reagan yesterday, and would need time to study it. But top administration officials long have opposed major spending to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants, a suspected source of acid rain. And relentless pressure to cut the budget doesn't make this a promising time to reconsider.

Budget officials weren't alone in questioning the proposed expense for the U.S. government, which would split the cost with the coal-burning industries under Mr. Lewis's proposal.

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