

1 SPEECH BY THE
2 HONORABLE JANET RENO,
3 ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
4 AT THE
5 GRAND OPENING CEREMONY
6 OF THE FIREARMS AND TOOLMARK EXAMINATION UNIT,
7 PRICE GEORGE'S COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
8 - - -
9
10 Wednesday, May 25, 1994
11 Police Services Complex
12 7600 Barlowe Road
13 Palmer Park, Maryland
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P R O C E E D I N G S

[10:37 a.m.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much,
Chief.

The first job I ever had, the first real paid summer job I ever had, was in the Dade County Sheriff's Department. In our unit the crime lab existed. It was very rudimentary at the time. I remember being amazed at what cases they could solve then by the limited technology they then had available.

For the last 15 years I've watched firearms examiners do what I think are miracles, and I have watched the expertise and the technology that has been brought to bear on the crime problem in America do remarkable things. I think one of the great challenges that law enforcement will face in these next 100 years is utilizing every bit of technology that we can apply to the problem to, one, be one step ahead of the bad guys, who are going to start using it more and more, and two, to unlock the secrets of technology and apply them where they can count and where America has so many of its concerns focused.

But it is not technology alone that will do or really solve the problem. We need to develop a partnership. It will do no good for the FBI or Federal agencies to develop a remarkable system if it is not

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1 applied at the local level. And we can't apply the system
2 at a local level unless we develop a true partnership,
3 unless we say to an area like Prince George's County: We
4 want to work with you and design a program that will meet
5 your needs and will fit in with the technology that exists
6 in your county.

7 What the FBI and Prince George's County and
8 surrounding areas have done here is a symbol of what we
9 can do if we create a partnership between the Federal,
10 State, and local governments, if we end the turf battles
11 and if we come together using every resource we can apply
12 to the problem without redundancy, in a cohesive fashion,
13 so that the programs are presented in the most
14 comprehensive and effective manner possible. And I
15 congratulate all involved in that effort.

16 But I think the key to this whole effort is it's
17 not technology, it's not partnerships that will ultimately
18 make the difference; what is ultimately going to make the
19 difference are the police officers on the streets and in
20 the laboratory who take that one extra step, find that
21 shell by one further step just a little bit beyond the
22 crime scene, find that one piece of evidence. That's
23 what's going to ultimately make the difference.

24 The technology won't count if we don't have the
25 information to apply it to. So with that in mind, the

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1 technology, the partnership, and the people, all of it
2 coming together, I think we can have a significant impact.

3 I am excited to be here because I used to say to
4 our police agencies in Miami: Why don't we just take a
5 computer and start putting Seven Eleven robberies into the
6 computer and start matching the cars and any other piece
7 of evidence; I bet we could make some cases. To see
8 what's done here today is just an exciting development.

9 For those of you unfamiliar with the program,
10 just think about it for a moment. A couple of years ago,
11 a firearms analyst would classify bullets and casings from
12 a drive-by shooting. His supervisor would come in and
13 review his work.

14 He would look at an unusual rifling
15 characteristic on one bullet, thought he'd seen it
16 someplace before, and then he would have to pore over
17 reports and logs and go through report after report and
18 sometimes reach a dead end. But in some cases, very rare
19 cases, he eventually matched the bullets and the casing to
20 another shooting incident.

21 He passed the information on to the detective
22 handling the case. They were in turn able to develop new
23 leads and eventually arrest the suspect wanted in the
24 shootings.

25 This is how cases were linked in the past, but

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1 they were few and far between, because you can imagine
2 what it's like to find that needle in the haystack. With
3 the deployment of Drugfire, police agencies will have one
4 more tool to use in this fight against violent crime.
5 Drugfire will help police link unsolved shooting incidents
6 to each other and to other firearms recovered by police.
7 Because of this program, shooters and other violent
8 criminals have been identified and put where they belong,
9 behind bars, not just in Prince George's County, but now
10 in other places throughout the Nation.

11 I understand even in my own home county of Dade
12 County that Broward County, Dade County, and the Florida
13 Department of Law Enforcement are working with the Bureau
14 and already cases have been solved because of this effort.

15 Let me give you an example closer to home. In
16 May 1992, a woman in Baltimore was wounded by a .40
17 caliber bullet fired from a Glock pistol. In July a man
18 was shot just a few blocks away. In the next two months
19 two more people were wounded by gunfire in neighboring
20 areas.

21 Each time the shooting seemed isolated. But
22 this time Baltimore police were able to use Drugfire to
23 match the casings from the different shootings. This led
24 them to conclude that the same gun was used in each crime.
25 Their final break came in October of that year, when the

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1 police arrested the suspect on a concealed weapons charge.

2 The police test fired the weapons and they found
3 they had a perfect match to the four shootings. That
4 would never have been possible in that many cases before
5 the development of Drugfire.

6 As I have said, though, Drugfire is a great
7 technological advance, but it owes its success to much
8 more than that. This program and many others like it
9 demonstrate how effective we can be when we work together.
10 But we have got to work together. We can't just talk
11 about it.

12 Unless we get every shred of information we can
13 into a database, we're not going to be able to make the
14 links. And it still comes back to people wanting to
15 cooperate, wanting to share information. And we are
16 determined to try to do that.

17 The FBI had the financial and technical
18 resources to make Drugfire possible. They had the
19 financial and technical resources that police agencies
20 across the country might not have. But it was the input
21 from local police agencies that made Drugfire work as well
22 as it does. You told us what you needed and what you
23 didn't need, more importantly, and you told us what worked
24 and what didn't work. Without your input, I don't think
25 the program would be nearly as effective as it is.

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1 I want to thank both the Federal Bureau of
2 Investigation and the Prince George's County Police
3 Department for their work. As a charter member of the
4 Drugfire Users Group, the Prince George's County Police
5 Department has made especially significant contributions
6 to Drugfire. All your efforts are greatly appreciated.

7 But we want to do more. In our anti-violence
8 initiative, it is my hope that the Drug Enforcement
9 Administration, the FBI, the Marshal Service, all of us
10 will join together, and the U.S. Attorneys working with
11 local prosecutors will develop a partnership at every
12 level in the anti-violence effort, not for us to take over
13 cases from you that are better handled in State courts,
14 not for us to claim credit, not for us to get the
15 headlines, but for us working together to get the job done
16 in a true partnership.

17 Local law enforcement is on the front line in
18 the fight against violence. They need every bit of
19 support that we can give them, and we're dedicated to
20 trying to do that.

21 With the Drugfire program, with this anti-
22 violence initiative, we can make a difference. But it
23 still comes back to people -- that police officer on the
24 beat, that community police officer working with citizens
25 in the community, developing their trust, identifying

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1 problems with them, developing priorities, bringing a
2 community back together.

3 I'm so gratified that we were able, working with
4 Senator Sarbanes and Senator Mikulski, to make available
5 these grant moneys to Prince George's County because I
6 think you have demonstrated how community policing can
7 work, and you recognized that it is people, it is that
8 police officer on the beat, it is that citizen in the
9 community who cares, who can make a difference.

10 It is important that we move forward because
11 there were too many communities who did not receive such a
12 grant. It is important that we get the crime bill passed
13 so that we can provide moneys for 100,000 community police
14 officers around this Nation to make come true what you are
15 doing in Prince George's County, come true in communities
16 throughout the country.

17 It comes back to the bottom line: It's people
18 that count -- that police officer who puts his or her life
19 on the line, that citizen who comes out and joins with
20 police officers and other members of the community to make
21 a difference. You are leading the way in Prince George's
22 County and I thank you.

23 (Applause and end of Attorney General Reno's
24 remarks at 10:47 a.m.)
25