

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES &
NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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TRANSCRIPT OF KEYNOTE ADDRESS

U. S. ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO, SPEAKER

Williamsburg, Virginia

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GOVERNOR GILMORE: It is my pleasure to present to you all this morning a distinguished national leader of the United States.

Attorney General Janet Reno was sworn in as the nation's 78th Attorney General by President Clinton on March 12th, 1993. From 1978 to the time of her appointment, General Reno served as the State Attorney General for Dade County, Florida. She was -- State Attorney for Dade County, Florida. She was initially appointed to the position by the Governor of Florida and was subsequently elected to that office five times.

General Reno was a partner in the Miami-based law firm of Steel, Hector & Davis from 1976 to 1978. Before that, she served as an assistant state attorney and as Staff Director of the Florida House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, after starting her legal career in private practice.

General Reno was born and raised in Miami, Florida, where she attended Dade County Public Schools. She received her A.B. in Chemistry from Cornell in 1960 and her law degree from Harvard Law School in 1963.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you a national leader who by her presence has demonstrated her commitment to this topic, the Attorney General of the United States, Attorney General Janet Reno.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Governors Gilmore and Hunt, thank you. Thank you for leading the way and showing us that our efforts to combat terrorism are not Republican or Democratic efforts, they are bipartisan efforts on behalf of all Americans. And the conversation I had with you this morning, Governor -- you have been so helpful to us -- I think it can really make a difference. For the opportunity to be here, I so very much appreciate both of your efforts and your leadership.

Mr. Thomasian, Ms. Gordon, my Justice Department colleague, Laurie Robinson, I'm very glad that you're here today, and I know that they will look forward to hearing from you.

I would especially like to thank Bruce Morris. And this is an example of what I hope we will be able to do. We had an exercise involving the Capitol area at the FBI early last fall. Bruce Morris came up to me and said, "The governors are going to have a meeting sometime in mid winter, and we want you to come to it." I got back to my office, and Bruce Morris was calling from someplace out west at the governors' meeting, and he followed up on it, and here I am. And that's the kind of follow-up I'd like to see us do for you in every way that we can.

In August of 1992 I woke up one morning, walked out -- didn't wake up, just walked out -- into utter devastation following Hurricane Andrew. I watched the community I love react in shock and in disbelief, and I began to understand what James Lee and so many of you must see too often, a community that was almost paralyzed. I then watched federal, state and local efforts come together in a partnership. It came slowly, though, and people began to realize that they had taken their society, their community, their governments for granted. But I watched that partnership form, and I watched a community emerge stronger, better and finer for it.

I then remember the morning of April the 19th, 1995 when I suddenly turned on CNN and there before me was a picture of unspeakable horror. I wondered how it would be possible for everyone to respond. I had never been so proud of Americans, of the people of Oklahoma City, of everybody who participated, as I was in the weeks that followed. Rather than blaming and criticizing, everybody pulled together in a remarkable spirit. The people of Oklahoma City knew each other, and that made a difference, but they reached out to others, and the federal government reached out to them. Fire fighters from across the nation joined. It was a remarkable, remarkable effort. And I think it shows both what Governor Gilmore and Governor Hunt have alluded to. The best way to make this work is to know people and to understand and be able to work with them, and we hope that this is a great beginning for that effort.

It became clear to me, as we looked at the problems associated with this effort, that it was fragmented; that there were too many government -- federal government agencies involved. And James Lee took me by the hand and said, "Here's the way we do it: The FBI should be

the lead agency, FEMA should be responsible for consequence management, and we should bring all the federal agencies in as partners."

We worked to build a consensus. We didn't go seeking lead agency status, but the Department, through the FBI, is the lead agency with respect to domestic terrorism incidents. That doesn't mean that I'm going to tell you what to do, because the key to it all is listening to you who are on the front lines and understanding what you think you need to do the job.

James Lee, I want to thank you for all that you have done on so many scenes across America, and also for educating me. But in part I educated myself, because I was a local prosecutor, and those Feds came to town, and they always told you what to do, and they always asked for something, but too often they didn't give something and they didn't engage in a two-way street. And I came to Washington resolved to do everything that I could to create a two-way street, whether it was on matters of violence and anti-violence initiative through local law enforcement or in terrorism, and that's what I'm dedicated to doing.

First responders are on the front lines. I have a very personal knowledge of it now because I have spent a number of evenings on the phone with my young nephew who is in fire college in Miami headed for being a Miami fireman, and I have a perfect understanding of at least what you're being trained to do.

I want to develop the two-way street on terrorism. In terms of operations, I want to make sure that there's a give and take and an exchange of information.

With respect to preparedness, I don't want to tell you, this is the training you need, I want to hear from you. How can we do it better? What can we do? What are the equipment needs that you have? I'd like to share with you some general principles by which I'm approaching this effort and then let you answer a question for me.

If you were Attorney General of the United States, what would you do to improve your efforts in support of state and local authorities across the country in responding to terrorism?

First of all, one of the principles that guides me is that terrorism is not an urban problem, it's everybody's problem. And as we prepare for operational responses, as we prepare for training and for equipment, I want to make sure that we do it in a comprehensive effort throughout a whole state.

Let's take Virginia. Instead of just training in Northern Virginia and just in Richmond and just in Norfolk, I want to make sure that OJP, the Office of Justice Programs for the National Domestic Preparedness Office, works with Virginia, hearing from Virginia as to how we do it for the whole State of Virginia, utilizing the training and equipping resources that we have. Governor, we look forward to that effort. Governor Hunt, go the other way on North Carolina,

east to west.

I want to build a process by which we understand each other, with the SAC or the Coordinator for Weapons of Mass Destruction of the FBI in operational preparation, getting to know the police chief, the fire chief, the emergency coordinator, making sure that the FBI coordinates with the state emergency preparedness director, making sure that the whole state is prepared.

Secondly, don't forget regions. Now, I'm particularly sensitive to that because I spent most of my professional life 365 miles down a peninsula, and there weren't any other states around, and I didn't have to worry. I now live in the District of Columbia, and having been through one table-top exercise with Maryland, Virginia, the District, the military, the Capitol Police, every police agency I can imagine, it is an extraordinary challenge, but we have got to participate in regional efforts to make sure that we address the problem.

James Lee told me best. Another principle that guides me is, don't reinvent. When the state emergency preparedness people have a plan of action, use it. It's usually been put to good use, and it's a good blueprint to begin with, and if people find holes in it then we can work with each other to correct it. But don't reinvent the wheel.

I think it is important that when we talk about terrorism we talk about all forms of it. We've seen the horror of conventional terrorism in Oklahoma City. We can conjure the horrors of weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons, and then there is a new weapon that we're just beginning to understand, the threat of cyber tools. If a person can sit in a kitchen in St. Petersburg, Russia and steal from a bank in New York, if a 17-year-old hacker can hack into military establishments, we have got to make sure that we are prepared to fight back in terms of the cyber terrorism.

Now, some don't understand this, but when you look at our systems, our defense system, our banking system, electrical system, transportation system, indeed the system that delivers our foods to the market, all of us are intertwined by cyber connections that we sometimes don't understand. We must be prepared to deal with them. We must consider all the forces that need to be brought to focus in terms of a terrorist attack; fire, emergency, medical, health. So many people tell me, one of the areas that is most forgotten is the local hospital system. Who goes where? Have you planned that? Have you thought about that? Our goal has got to be -- again and again we must stress to ourself our goal has got to be, save lives first. We've got to make sure that public health -- that all of us understand what our role will be in a particular situation in a particular community and that we be prepared to take action.

Key, however, to everything that we do has got to be, what can we do to prevent it. Governor Gilmore pointed out that we're not going to be able to prevent everything, but we've seen situations where we have prevented a tragedy, and if we work together, exchange information, make sure that we furnish each other with current information we may have

some real success.

How do we do that? The first issue that I hope that you will come back to me on is one that both governors have alluded to, how do we exchange classified information. In many instances we can declassify it in certain forms, but in others you're going to have to know about a specific person or specific information that might reveal a source and a method, and if you know about it your police officers can be on the lookout for something or somebody that will tie into the information that we have. How do we get that information to you? Who do you want to have it? What can we do? How do we share our five-year terrorism strategy with you? We have here today a declassified version of it, but how do we provide information? These are the issues that I want to resolve and resolve quickly, because we will not have a partnership unless we have a partnership based on mutual trust.

At the same time, it was an Oklahoma City policeman that found the VIN number. It was an Oklahoma trooper who arrested the defendant. State and local law enforcement as well will have pieces of information that, if fit together with federal information, might help us prevent the crime in the first place. Exchange of information, to me, is key to prevention.

The next is preparedness. Training. I'm going to discuss training a little bit more in a moment, but we have got to make sure that the federal agencies are trained, trained with you, trained to respond, and that you have the training that you need. Not the fluffy, irrelevant training that we sometimes see in training programs but direct, precise training that focuses on what you believe to be your needs.

Equipment. Law enforcement and others have been criticized because they bought too many fancy pieces of equipment. Let's take the money that is going to be available and buy it in the wisest way possible, particularly with respect to technology. Again, let us make sure that we use the resources of the national laboratories, of the private sector, of academia, mixed with your needs on the front line to develop the best technology we can to respond.

But Governor Gilmore alluded to one final point. I wonder what John Marshall would say if he looked at our technology and looked at our problems and looked at the fact that we could cross the Atlantic Ocean in probably one one-hundredth of the time that it took a ship to sail in 1607 or 1792. He'd be amazed.

But John Marshall, living today, would still demand that except in those emergencies that he envisioned this nation ought to be able to respond to terrorism while at the same time adhering to the constitution that he loved. That is the great challenge of law enforcement, and working together we can meet it.

The President has been so committed to this effort. I got a call that there was a cabinet meeting at the -- or part of a cabinet meeting at the White House, and I was to be there. I

came in. There were urgency directors from a major metropolitan area, there were scientists, and we had one of the best sessions that I've heard on the subject of biological weapons and other forces of destruction. He told us to go out and start making sure that we could get the tools to you that you needed to do the job.

An example of this effort is what we're trying to do to make sure that all levels of government can communicate in terms of a crisis. It was so frustrating to hear from those on the front line in Oklahoma City about how hard it was to communicate, how important it was to have runners that could get to the next person because there wasn't communication available. We're devoting \$4 million this year to testing and funding the equipment to help address the interoperability problems that plague all of law enforcement and all of first responders. The President's budget for next year includes an additional \$160 million for attacking these problems both at the federal level and at the state level. We look forward to working with you to make sure that we can communicate.

Another tool that we have developed is the establishment of the National Infrastructure Protection Center to help bring together all the information we have about cyber attacks on our infrastructure. With representation from state and local government, we hope to make sure that we provide assistance, support and information across this country to protect against the cyber attacks that could bring down our infrastructure.

With respect to biological weapons, the President has announced new money from medical initiatives dealing with these issues and increasing the terrorism budget to train and equip to deal with these threats.

In addition, I realized that one of the first things we've got to do is identify an attack by biological terrorists as soon as possible, that we've got to be able to respond. We've been meeting with the national laboratories and others to determine the latest equipment and to do everything we can to bring that equipment on line so that if there were an attack in Norfolk we could immediately identify the pathogen, so that we could immediately respond with the latest response possible to minimize the damage done, the lives lost.

Then I thought, how do we figure it's an attack as opposed to some natural pathogen? So, I got the docs from the Public Health Service and Dr. Peggy Hamburg, who is the Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services and former Emergency Coordinator in New York, together with the FBI, and said, we've got to start looking at how we solve these problems together, and we're going to need medical detectives as well. But I heard too often -- and Laurie Robinson heard too often -- that there were quadrophonics at the federal level. There were more than quadrophonics, there were 40 people, 40 agencies, talking.

Laurie -- and I thank you for your foresight -- pulled together and organized a Stakeholders Forum for First Responders and Emergency Management Officials in August of last year. More

than two hundred state and local emergency responders and planners and practitioners came together to identify their needs and recommend solutions. Some of you here today participated. You drew up a good strategy, five well-reasoned sets of objectives, and you gave me the best summary in 45 minutes that I've gotten in the five and a half years I've been in Washington.

The number one objective was to identify a single federal agency to work with local communities in establishing a coordinated plan for responding to terrorist attacks. We heard your message loud and clear. The federal government, the President, had designated the FBI as the lead agency in domestic terrorist attacks, recognizing that FEMA was the lead agency with respect to consequence management.

Working together, we developed a National Domestic Preparedness Office which we have proposed. We want to make sure that we work together to identify one place that you can go to get information to understand what's being developed in terms of preparedness. But it was clear that there was one agency that had had long-standing experience with dealing with state and local officials at all levels, and that was the Office of Justice Programs. They had a mechanism for training, they had a mechanism for dispensing money, and, so, they have become a partner with the National Domestic Preparedness Office working together, each doing what they do best to make sure that this will work if this office is approved.

We've got to train, we've got to equip, we've got to do it the right way. We're going to find out the right way to do it, not try to solve it by academia alone, not by talking amongst our federal selves, but by listening to you.

Now, Governor, I hate to do this to you, but that phone number isn't that special. It is the phone number that rings to my desk, but it's 514-2002, and I care enough about this that if you have problems that you can't get worked out through good discussion, call me. I want to make sure that the federal government does absolutely everything it can to be prepared. I know, because I've been through it, that we can't prevent everything, but I want to do everything that we can to prevent, to be prepared, to minimize, and then, if we can't do all of that, to bring the people who did it to justice.

I admire you. I salute you. The number is 514-2002, and now I'd like to ask you a question.

If you were Attorney General of the United States, what would you do, right now and for this year, in developing the best response possible for you?

And I think there's some microphones down there.

Don't be shy.

Yes.

MR. CLINE: Attorney General Reno, thank you so much for your comments. I'm John Cline, the Bureau of Disaster Services Director from the State of Idaho.

I am particularly gratified about your comments regarding preparedness and communications.

Most of the emergency management community, at the local level and also at the state level, have a great deal of experience in responding to disasters, be they natural or man-made, and I think one of the things that I would do were I the Attorney General was to try to get federal agencies, specifically the FBI, to adopt the incident command system and the unified command as the single method with which we will work with state and local agencies with a response to and recovery from disasters or weapons of mass destruction incidents.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I need to be better educated on that. If I might, I'll make sure somebody gets your number and follow up with a call to you when you get back.

MR. CLINE: Thank you, ma'am.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

Anybody that has any other questions, you might line up.

MR. HOLM: Dave Holm, Chief of Operations, Colorado Office of Emergency Management.

And this came up at a meeting we recently had on biological terrorism. I think as a community emergency responders are relatively comfortable with dealing with nuclear and chemical emergencies. As we've heard this morning, biological is the area that we have some differences, and I think what we need to look at -- I'm very pleased by some of the initiatives I've heard about this morning, but because most of us are limited in resources and the applicability will be limited, I think perhaps what we need is something equivalent to the nuclear emergency research teams but in the biological area; that is, clearly a federal lead but something that can serve the wider interests with the very high technology resources that are required that can rapidly deploy and that can assist the state and local communities in implementing their responsibilities in this area that's so far out of almost all of our capabilities and experience.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I will talk to Dr. Hamburg and representatives from Public Health,

and let us -- and Donna Shalala, and I'll make sure somebody has your name and telephone number so we can get back to you.

Yes, sir.

MR. JENSEN: Yes, ma'am.

I'm D. C. Jensen, the Chief Planner for the Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness.

Louisiana had proposed a memorandum of understanding with the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the purpose of setting up specific procedures and mechanisms for cooperation in this area. I wonder if you are encouraging such initiatives.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What I want to do is what is best for communities. I think the governors are right. We need some overall strategy, overreaching strategy, but there are going to be differences based on different communities, their needs and resources, and if an MOU can serve a purpose, that may be appropriate. That clearly has been a subject of discussion and one we would like to pursue.

The other issue that I want us to think about -- there are two.

Dwight Eisenhower gave a wonderful farewell address. Anybody who has not read it should read it, because it is a great, great political statement. And in it he warned of the industrial military complex. I think we've got to make sure that we don't get sold equipment and ideas by the industrial law enforcement or infrastructure protection complex that wastes our money.

And, so, anything that we can do in terms of working together to make sure that we spend it right, that we train right, will be extremely helpful.

MR. HOLM: Thank you.

MR. PILKINGTON: Good morning. Robb Pilkington from the State of Missouri.

One of our concerns is that the grant programs are fragmented and there does not appear to be a mechanism for states to implement a strategy when locals are getting grants directly from OJP, as they did this year.

CDC is approaching some communities. The emphasis with the DOD program was 157 cities, or 120 and then expanded.

Perhaps we can take a look at consolidating at the national level a procedure in which a state

strategy is developed and then funding is applied so that a true state/local capability can be put together to maximize the efficiency of the funds.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think this is going to be one of the most important efforts that we undertake. Laurie Robinson -- I believe you'll be hearing from her later, and I would hope that she will address this with you.

As you heard me point out, what I want to do is make sure -- and the mechanism may vary from state to state, but we plan statewide and then by region as well for the whole picture. We have a number of joint terrorism task forces, but that doesn't address the whole country. We've got to do it in a comprehensive way in terms of training, and what I will ask Laurie to do is follow up, report back to me and let me know how we address this issue and what we can do to follow up on it.

I know the tensions. I'll -- if I go talk to the mayors they'll say, it's our problem, we're on the front lines. I was there when Lawton Chiles was governor, and he was a great governor. I've worked for the state, and I've worked for local communities, and what we need to do is to develop a partnership, and our efforts through OJP have got to be to build that partnership, if it has to be state by state. But I think we can address the issue of a strategy that can help focus attention and solve problems.

MR. McBRIDE: I'm Dennis McBride, the State Health Director of North Carolina.

And much of what we do in North Carolina, as Governor Hunt mentioned, that we work towards developing programs that deal on a local level. One of the ways -- the unusual aspect of bioterrorism as far as a disaster is the biological aspect of this threat. The -- a lot of the response will be, as you mentioned, local public health involvement and local public health leadership. Often in disasters public health -- local public health leadership is not -- they're not central to, often, the emergency responses and the differences.

One of the things that concerns me is the -- I guess I will call it the mayor of Jaws syndrome, there's no sharks in this water type of situation, where there might be some hesitancy where on a local level the biologic threat is there and there is, because of the stigma of -- and the profound economic effects of a false call of a bioterrorism event on a

local level, from getting information out and triggering responses.

How do you -- how would you address those issues of the hesitancy of a false call of bioterrorism and also enabling and so -- I don't want to use the word -- empowering the local public health community to respond.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First of all, I think the public health community is one of the

sometimes most forgotten players in all the systems, whether it be a player with criminal justice in solving criminal justice problems, and I see them emerging as a new and more powerful force. I see us working with them on so many issues that affect the criminal justice system.

I am vastly encouraged by the President's direct action as a result of this meeting, the funding of an initiative with HHS and the Public Health Service and the leadership that Dr. Hamburg brings to this issue. I think you're going to see some new initiatives that can truly make a difference. And I don't pretend to be an expert in it.

I think if you do some table tops, and if you let the Mayor know what it means if you don't catch it now and that you can limit it, and here's the medical information on it, and here's what we can do to limit and control and restrict the spread of the biological terror, mayors are going to be very receptive to taking steps to save lives.

MR. O'CONNOR: Good morning, ma'am. I'm Dick O'Connor of the State of Washington.

And I would ask you to take leadership to develop a strategy to protect the constitutional rights and interests that the terrorists by their acts are in fact attacking, and we need to do that in a proactive sense so that we have discussions about them, just as we do about how we're going to address the real effects of the weapons of mass destruction themselves, which would minimize the concerns of our citizens, our mayors and our governors.

Thank you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think this is a point well taken.

What we have done -- interestingly enough, we've had combinations of various divisions in U. S. Attorneys' offices who have dealt with groups that use either false tax liens or other means of threats and finally threaten in terms of violence, what we can do collectively to limit the violation of individual rights or the violation of a person's privacy that is produced by some groups. But the whole theme is how can we prevent it, how do we keep it from happening, while at the same time ensuring the rights of all. I believe we can do it, and I would welcome your suggestions.

The address is 20 -- Janet Reno, Department of Justice, 10th Avenue and Constitution, Washington, 20530. Something like that.

(Laughter.)

Somebody got a letter to me -- in 1957 at Christmastime the week I was coming back from college we came across a terrible accident on a very lonely stretch of lonely highway in the

Everglades, my mother and sister and I, about 2 o'clock in the morning. One man was killed, two children were in the car, and I opened the door and the little girl obviously was very badly injured. And I got a letter the other day addressed to Janet Reno, Washington, D.C., from the mother saying that she still remembered, and she thanked my sister and myself and missed my mother.

So, you can get me somehow or another.

(Laughter.)

MR. LANCE: Attorney General, Al Lance, Attorney General from Idaho. Good to see you again.

And, Jim Gilmore, good to see you. And, Governor Hunt, thank you for your remarks.

One of the things, Attorney General, that I think probably you could assist with through the auspices of the Office of the National Association of Attorneys General is basically a review of the open records laws of the various states and how they the dovetail with the FOIA.

As Governor Gilmore has indicated, sharing information is probably essential to the states. Unfortunately, we have certain state enactments dealing with open records that would require the release of some of the information that was provided, as was the case in Arkansas recently where the Disaster Emergency Escape Plan of the Governor of the State of Arkansas had to be released to the press upon request and subsequently was published. And I think we need to start taking inventory as to which states have an open records law that would require the release of sensitive or secret information.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Excellent idea, and thank you very much. And I'll be in touch with you all and with NAAG to follow up on that.

MR. LANE: Thank you very much.

MR. BOGLE: Good morning. I'm Steven Bogle from the Iowa Department of Public Safety.

And along those same lines with regards to public information and what we've talked about here this morning as far as prevention, it would seem to me a good initiative from your level would be to the FBI and WMT coordinators contact those states and initiate national security clearances of top secret or key individuals so that we can share some of this information in a prevention effort, whereas now there may be some obstacles to that, so that the first time that they have that information that they're not trying to crisis manage that -- who can I tell this to; who is the appropriate people?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's one of the issues that we, I hope, have underway, and I

will double-check to make sure that we do when I get back.

I'm getting the hook.

MR. MORRIS: Not me. I'm not that brave.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'll tell you what. He's just given me the hook. You can blame it all on Bruce.

If you will call me -- I'll be in the office all day tomorrow, and if you will call I will follow up on the comments. And if I'm not immediately available I'll tell my secretary to arrange a time when we will be sure to connect.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

(The keynote address concluded.)

COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Heidi L. Jeffreys, RMR, CRR, a Registered Professional Reporter, certify that I recorded verbatim by Stenotype the captioned proceeding in Williamsburg, Virginia, on February 2, 1999.

I further certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the foregoing transcript constitutes a true and correct transcript of the said proceeding.

Given under my hand this _____ day of _____, 1999, at Norfolk, Virginia.

Heidi L. Jeffreys, RMR, CRR