

cb
TCB

1991 SUMMIT ON CRIME

CLOSING REMARKS
of
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD THORNBURGH

Tuesday, March 5, 1991

Cotillion Ballroom
Sheraton Washington Hotel
Washington, D.C.

P R O C E E D I N G S .

MR. RAWLS: Without any adieu, let me turn matters over to the Attorney General, to give us a wrap-up of the 1991 Crime Summit.

Mr. Attorney General.

[Applause]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: We are going to have a clean-up hither, folks, and I have nominated myself for that role. I know a lot of you have planes, trains and automobiles that are awaiting you, to carry you back home, but I think we would miss an opportunity if we didn't take some time for a moment to reflect upon what has been accomplished here this week.

I have here the reports that have been rendered by the moderators at each of the 15 panel sessions, our breakout groups that occurred during the day. I have reviewed them and I assure you they will be reviewed by all of those who are in policymaking positions within this administration, to provide the kind of support that is necessary to enable each of you, both within and without the criminal justice system, to not only do your job, but to take comfort in the fact that we have together, as I hoped at the outset of this great

session, created a result, the whole of which is much greater than simply the sum of its parts.

I am going to ask, before I close officially, a half a dozen folks who are here today to give us kind of a one-minute summary of the things that they feel were important, and they can be positive or negative or neutral. But I think rather than simply reviewing my own impressions, we have looked around for a representative half dozen 60-second wonders who can give us some insights in a representative capacity as to what they feel we have accomplished or what remains to be done as a result of our efforts here this week.

I am going to call them in order and quickly, and I invite you to give your attention to those who represent I believe broadly the interests of all of us who are here today.

The first person I am going to ask to step to the microphone, and they are around the room here, is Dorothy Davis, the Chairperson of Stop Crime Watch, in Dallas, Texas. The acronym for her organization is STOP, successfully teaching us how to live in peace.

Dorothy, I know you have got a flight to catch, we thank you for coming here and sharing your thoughts with us.
Dorothy Davis.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you very, very much. As soon as I can get my composure, I am going to use up my 60 seconds.

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: We won't start the clock until your composure is in order, Dorothy.

[Laughter.]

MS. DAVIS: To Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and everyone here this afternoon, I would just like to personally thank you for having been chosen.

I would like to compliment everyone who had a hand in putting this summit together. Yes, we do, and I quote, "have the right to be free from fear in our homes, in our streets and in our communities." I say to all present, by any means necessary, we must make this a reality.

I also would beg of you to begin now assuring mothers and fathers that her daughter and her son will not meet death on our city streets after overcoming the Desert Storm of the war.

In closing, we must all pluck weeds and plant new seeds, with watering and tender loving care. I beg of you to start early in a child's life with activities and basic skills that will work. If Japan can do it, I know America can and I know we must.

I beg of all the justice systems that are represented here, local, national and Federal, to establish a systematic system across the Nation, make sure it works, make sure that monies get to cities--just make sure it works. I forget what I was going to write there. So, whatever I said, make sure it works.

[Applause.]

I was impressed with the speaker from Charles Rangel's office making the statement that we should work towards keeping individuals out of prison, and I hope that some implementation can be made.

I also thank Attorney general Longren for mentioning that the men and women in the war had taken charge by using high technological war machinery.

In closing, I would like to ask you to make sure that the Justice Department balance the scales and make it work. I also would leave this with people in charge. Mr. Attorney General, I have a picture for you. I had one for the President, and would you make sure he gets it.

[Laughter, applause.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: Make it work, there is some simple eloquence there that I think applies to every

single one of us in this room. I thank you Dorothy Davis.

Next, we will hear from the Attorney General of Oregon, Dave Frohnmayer, former President of the National Association of Attorneys General, and a strong advocate for habeas corpus reform.

Welcome, Dave.

MR. FROHNMAYER: Thank you, Mr. Attorney General.

Let me summarize my conclusion under six major themes, if I can do so in 60 seconds. The first is to express the gratitude of our association, 25 percent of whose members are presently present here, for your attention and that of the President of the United States.

No issue comes to the top of the Nation's domestic agenda by some happy accident. It is only because of the President's commitment and yours that this issue, this real issue of violence has arrived to the top of the agenda, and we appreciate it and we will deeply support it, because we believe, too, in the moral authority of the law, not indeterminacy in the law.

Our second point is that we deeply appreciate the constant emphasis and reemphasis on cooperation that has gone on beyond the language of buzz words. Multi-jurisdictional

task forces are the wave of the future, we believe, but we particularly appreciate the examples that were shown, not only the Philadelphia experience, but the good cookbook that Bill Baker gave us of the pitfalls, the strengths and weaknesses, and we believe that additional sharing of experiences, not only of successes, but of failures in that regards, would be very useful to all jurisdictions, and perhaps that could be on our continuing agenda.

A third point is the legal issues, and I need not reemphasize our concern about habeas corpus reform. We see and experience the anger and the expense of current procedures, and it will, I assure you, be on the agenda of the National Association of Attorneys General, which meets here, as you know, in just a few days. We will begin our work with you and your administration.

Our fourth point revolves around the issues of modern technology, where there is a unique Federal role, one that is beyond the financial abilities as well as the expertise of most, except the largest jurisdictions, DNA profiling, forensic science, fingerprint networks, computer technology, VICAPP, forecasting and the rest.

Three specific suggestions: First of all, Mr.

Attorney General, if the knowledge about the availability of these technologies could be disseminated even more widely, we believe that the Nation's police and communities would be greatly served; secondly, the availability of national flying squads, as was suggested in one of the meetings, I think is a very, very sound and would be very welcome for all of us; and, finally, the development of national standards for this emerging technology, so that, through inadvertence or misapplication of these technologies, we do not have adverse court decisions that impede the development of the law and of science, when it can be so useful to us.

Point five was your useful and helpful focus on the community and prevention, and that has two separate aspects: First, the alarming reduction in age of the violent criminals who increasingly are victimizing fellow citizens and the parallel emergence of the gang phenomenon, which even heightens ever-greater danger. It shows a juvenile justice system that simply does not work, and emphasis even more poignantly the dysfunctional families that give rise to this and, therefore, the need for community prevention.

The second aspect of that is the necessity at all levels for understanding drug prevention programs that really

work. We all have drug prevention programs, but it is only I think within Federal capabilities to measure the effectiveness, so that we know how to replicate the programs that really do work and work effectively.

Our last point, Mr. Attorney General, and I am sure you appreciate this, please do this again in due course. I have been an attorney general for 12 years, and there has never been a summit nor national focus on issues of violent crime. And given the fact that that plagues this Nation, once in a dozen years is not enough.

I have in that respect four suggestions: First, since we only saw one-seventh of any of the breakout sessions, would it be possible that we be given at least executive summaries of what transpired, so that we may participate.

Second, may I respectfully suggest, even though your United States Attorneys are overworked, that perhaps the executive summaries would be ideal agenda items for the law enforcement coordinating committees in each of our Federal districts, so that they can be fed back to the local level.

The third would be the community groups who, in turn, could also share that information; and the fourth point, obviously, would be to allow that dissemination, in

turn, to bubble back to your next summit, the ideas from the field that would be so useful.

This has been a splendid idea, Mr. Attorney General, and we deeply thank you and your devoted staff.

[Applause.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: Thank you, David.

The specificity of your agenda we hope we can match with our response.

A distinguished mayor of one of our major American citizens, the Honorable Kurt Schmoke, Mayor of Baltimore, to his great credit, has attended each and every session during this summit conference. Mayor Schmoke is a former prosecutor himself, involved on a day-to-day basis with the problems of violent crime in one of our major metropolitan areas.

Mayor Schmoke.

[No response.]

I guess he was involved in every session up until the last one.

[Laughter.]

I'm sorry, because I know that Mayor Schmoke had some observations to offer, and if he wants to offer them subsequent to our meeting, we will see that they are circu-

lated to you. I apologize to him and to you for calling upon him, when obviously his schedule took him away.

The Chief of Police of Mobile, Alabama, Harold Johnson, formerly of Detroit, Michigan, has taken the concept of community police cooperation to his current position.

Chief, are you here? There he is.

MR. JOHNSON: General Thornburgh, as you well know, we Chiefs of Police of America have always had access to your office and we appreciate that. We greatly appreciate this summit here, which has brought together others in the area of the criminal justice field from the Executive Branch right on down to the grass roots level.

A couple of things that we would like to mention to you that we have learned in policing in America, and that is nothing new, we are going back to it, and that is community oriented policing.

In that community oriented policing, we have learned that we have to be pro-active, rather than reactive. A house divided cannot stand, and we have a lot of houses divided here, General Thornburgh, and we ask that somehow we get together to bring that house back together, that being the family. If we can do that, then I think we will be able

to greatly reduce crime in America. It all begins at home. As you all know, all of us are successful because of our parents and because somebody in the house wielded a two-by-four when it was time to do it.

[Applause.]

Secondly, as the President of the International Association of Chief of Police recommended to your office and also to the office of the President himself, we hope that we can carry this step a little bit further, and that we ask to strongly consider a White House conference on anti-crime in America. We think bringing in all of the brightest minds of America to deal with this problem, we think if we can do that, crime is a costly item in America today, it is destroying the future of America, and we must get a handle on it.

The two strong things that we need to do, as I said, is bring the family into the fold. As you well know, a lot of policing was done by mom and dad, and we need to get back to the real policing and that is the family.

[Applause.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: Thank you, Steve.

Next, I am going to call on Tom Charron, the President-Elect of the National District Attorneys Associa-

tion, who is an advocate of strong criminal laws to fight crime.

To, are you with us?

MR. CHARRON: Thank you, Mr. Attorney General.

It has been stated that all State and local prosecutors handle over 95 percent of all the criminal cases that come through our courts in America. Speaking on behalf of America's local district attorneys, I thank you for this informative and comprehensive summit which has focused on violent crimes in our streets and in our communities.

America's local prosecutors have had the responsibility to bring violent offenders to justice and you have helped us in our war on crime. From defining the issues in our opening sessions to such breakout sessions dealing with State and local crime initiatives, violence against children, model programs and new tools to help us combat crime, you have given us indications and tools with which we can work.

In closing, we do need more open dialogue and cooperation to be successful in our legislative efforts, for more funding for the overworked and sometimes underpaid prosecutors of America, and more effective changes in the laws that will give us tools to combat the crimes in our

streets and neighborhoods.

We need to follow up with this excellent summit with a strategy conference on initiatives to enact these laws and to help in the areas of funding, to insure a safe America for all.

Mr. Attorney General, on behalf of more than 25,000 local prosecutors throughout America, I want to applaud your aggressive efforts and deeply thank you for this worthwhile summit.

Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: Thank you.

The last of those whom I have asked to respond is a very special person. Jack Collins, the Eastern Regional Director of Citizens for Law and Order, lost his 19-year-old daughter, a member of the United States Marine Corps, when she was brutally murdered.

Jack fought back by founding an organization to represent the concerns of all victims, and I think if there has been an added dimension that has been added to this conference this week, it has been the presence of those persons who represent the victims groups, because ultimately

it is the failure of the system that produces the victims of crime, and I think that insight is very important for all of us who have responsibility for our criminal justice system.

Jack, if you are here, please. Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Mr. Attorney General, thank you.

As a victim and as a parent of a murdered daughter, I am heartened by your references and the references of other leaders of this conference to the victim and a significant place the victim has in the criminal justice system.

For too long, there has been a disproportionate amount of attention paid to defendants and convicted felons. It is time we restored balance, and I hear you saying and I hear others saying that time is now, we are putting the victim back in a central place in the criminal justice system, and thank God we are.

[Applause.]

Mr. Attorney General, as a representative of the grass roots organization, an activist grass roots organization, I applaud the metaphor you used in Desert Storm in application to crime, the context of crime. It is a vicious warfare we have, a domestic vicious warfare.

We victims are the walking wounded. We have buried

our KIA's, and those of our KIA's that we have buried, the action they were involved in was the peaceful pursuit of an average innocent citizen, and that person was our daughter and the sons and daughters of other people here who are those KIA's.

I think, sir, that our Nation must pay as much attention to our fallen, to our wounded, and to the citizens facing that battle every day as they have to our comrades in arms in Iraq in Operation Desert Storm.

[Applause]

Mr. Attorney General, we must face down the domestic enemy, and some of the best weapons we have are our policies and legislation. Over the past two days of deliberation, although I didn't need that, I came to this conclusion a while ago, I am convinced, for this battle, there is no single more effective instrument, more vital than habeas corpus reform. I am convinced of that.

Nothing affords the criminal justice system more clout, more integrity, more credibility than putting an end to the interminable delays of convicted vicious killers on this Nation's death rows. These endless appeals, these appeals without end make a mockery of the criminal justice system.

They insult our juries.

We thought the juries were the crown jewel of our criminal justice system. They insult the verdicts of those juries, sir. They insult the citizens of 36 States who have said we need death penalty statutes. It insults those States, it insults the victims whom we have buried, it insults the victims' families who are still here, and that must stop. It violates the elemental fairness and justice that we thought were inherent in the system.

On a personal note: We have already buried our loved ones. Our daughter has been in the ground at Arlington National Cemetery for five and a half years. There has been no closure to our grief, because of the abuse of the appeals system. There is no closure to our emotional suffering, to our psychological suffering, there is no end to our nightmares.

The juries say that the appropriate response of society to a vicious depraved murder is the ultimate sanction, the death penalty. The way the Federal habeas corpus procedure is being abused, in effect, vetoes the voice of those juries, and effective veto. We are left twisting in the wind. For how many years? Trin and I are looking at 5, 6,

7, 7 more years, as we wind our ways through the Federal courts.

Mr. Attorney General, your proposal on habeas corpus reform is not just another legislative proposal. It is red meat. It cuts deep. It affects the very fundamental things that we thought made our society great and that makes us proud of our society. It affects not just my wife and I, not just the other victims here. It affects every citizen in this country in a very fundamental and elemental way. It takes away a birthright of those citizens and the birthright of all of us victims.

Mr. Attorney General, I want you to know that our organization, Citizens for Law and Order, and companion organizations throughout the country who are coming within our umbrella, support you in your initiative. We are going to be out there persuading our fellow citizens to see the significance to themselves of habeas corpus reform, so it is not a Latin phrase, but it is a burning, living element that makes their lives worthwhile, if it is handled properly.

We are going to go on to the Halls of Congress, we are going to meet our Senators and Representatives, we are going to subcommittee hearings and committee hearings, we are

going to lobby during floor debate, we are going to do everything we can to support your initiative and have it enacted, legislated, and it will be a tribute not only to our daughter, not only to the sons and daughters of other people here, or the husbands and wives, but will be a tribute to what makes America great, also.

Sir, we salute you, in the names of all victims here. We thank you for letting us participate in your conference. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL THORNBURGH: Now I get to have the last word. Let me say first how impressed I am with your contributions and with the reports that have been given to me. And we will have the complete transcription of all of the break-out sessions of these proceedings available for study and reference and use and reiteration over the months and years to come as we continue this effort.

I am also grateful for so many of you who have expressed your willingness to become part of a coalition against crime, to join in this struggle to conquer freedom from fear on our streets and our homes and in our communities. As our President noted and as many of you have referred to,

our fight against violent crime does indeed have much in common with Operation Desert Storm, that great effort to win the Gulf War.

But I want to note two important distinctions. The first was drawn by Los Angeles Police Chief Darryl Gates at the panel on drug-related crime. Chief Gates pointed out that early and correctly the President identified the enemy in the Gulf; not the Iraqi people, but Saddam Hussein. That made an immense difference even as we met the Iraqis on the field of battle.

Chief Gates said that we need to do a similar job of identifying the enemy at home. But he recognized that that is going to be a lot harder because this enemy is hiding among us, lurking in our mean streets and threatened communities, not somewhere under a bunker in a distant land. We must identify these violent criminals and nobody is better at doing that than you, residents of our neighborhoods and our State and local law enforcement officials. You know the enemy readily by location and habitat, often by name and any success in this fight against violent crime absolutely depends on your street smarts and daily probity. We count on you both to reveal the violent perpetrators and to restore

domestic peace and a better quality of life to your communities once they are gone. Nobody does it better and I salute you and promise our increasing support.

One other distinction; the saving grace of the Gulf War was its miraculous brevity. It lasted 43 days. And when the tanks finally rolled out across the desert, the ground war was over in 100 hours. We can offer no such prospect of quick victory over violent crime. This is no short war we are engaged in here at home. Hostilities have already been long and relentless, greatly protracted by drug trafficking. And our commitment must therefore be equally enduring.

That is why we have emphasized the need to work together at this crime summit to join in a great coalition against crime in which we can help and aid each other at all levels, Federal, State and local, to clear our streets of drugs and crime and carnage. That is also the way in which we can help the victims of violent crime whose fate has been too often ignored when their value to the community and their help to our law enforcement efforts cries out for recognition and they for comfort.

Let me summarize, if you will permit me, what I think we have gained here at this summit. At the outset, I

mentioned three aspects of that successful Gulf strategy that we might try to emulate, proper command and control, ingenuity of weaponry and certainty of result. Already we see the need for more embracing command and control over our multiple forces ranked against violent crime. But that command and control must be exercised as wisely as the President, our Commander-in-Chief, did in the Gulf. Remember, he left the real battle in the hands of those on the ground in command of the immediate forces. And that is how we must conduct whatever joint endeavor we mount together against violent crime.

You are in the field at the State and local levels and your knowledge, your choices, your tactics, your plans and your orders will be respected. We at the Department of Justice are here to help but never to direct or to second-guess. As for ingenuity, this conference has brought forth some truly astonishing innovative ideas for law enforcement, including some fascinating applications of new technology and state of the art methodology.

Dave Frohnmayer referred to some of them and I will not go into any great detail. They will be summarized in the excellent reports that were prepared. But they can only

arrive on target in salvos if we support the necessary research and development efforts and share the results nationwide. This we must and we will do.

Finally let me speak to this matter of certainty. Simply put, the law must hold violent criminals accountable for their vicious acts. The law must be certain and where any law is weak or ambiguous or judicially misconstrued, it must be made certain. And that is a job we will seek to do here at the Federal level with what has been suggested as needed legislation for inclusion in the President's Anti-Crime Bill.

We are going to present to Congress the tough laws to halt and deter violent crime and we are going to insist that our courts apply those laws properly so that the scales can be truly balanced between the law-abiding and the law-breaking and in favor of justice.

Thank you all for the magnificent contributions that you have made to this 1991 Summit on Law Enforcement and our response to violent crime. Have a safe trip home and an even safer community tomorrow and thereafter. Godspeed.

[Whereupon, at 4:42 p.m., the proceedings were concluded.]

- - -