



# Department of Justice

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REMARKS

BY

DICK THORNBURGH

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

AT HIS

FAREWELL CEREMONY

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1991  
THE GREAT HALL  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Three years ago this morning I first walked into my fifth-floor office to assume the duties of Attorney General of the United States.

Now, this morning, it falls to me to bid farewell to you, my friends, colleagues and co-workers at this Department of Justice.

What an exciting, tumultuous and challenging three years it has been. And I have loved almost every minute of it.

So I want first to extend to each of you my thanks for your support, your commitment, your fortitude, and, yes, your patience during my tenure as "The A.G.". You have truly performed above and beyond the call of duty.

I also want to share with you this morning some of the pride I feel in what we have accomplished together over these past three years and to emphasize some of the challenges that still lie ahead.

Shortly after I returned here in August of 1988, I spoke to you in this very Great Hall and set forth my goals for the Department during my tenure. I am pleased to say that we can look back with real satisfaction on the progress made, with your invaluable help, toward each of those goals I set forth.

In 1988, at the very top of my list of priorities was an all-out effort against drug-trafficking and money-laundering. Today, arrests, prosecutions, convictions, and asset forfeitures -- from crack houses to frat houses -- are at record-high levels. We, alone among all law enforcement agencies in the world, have successfully prosecuted BCCI -- the Bank of Commerce and Credit International -- on drug-money laundering charges resulting in a record \$15 million penalty and prison sentences for five convicted bank officials ranging up to twelve years. With, I assure you, much more to come!

Our streamlined efforts against organized crime have produced landmark convictions against La Cosa Nostra kingpins in New England, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York, together with civil actions designed to clean mob influence out of the Teamsters Union, the Atlantic City casinos, and the New York waterfront. We are now focusing on newly emerging groups involved in organized criminal activity -- Asian heroin distributors, Colombian cocaine cartels, and Jamaican Posses and the Crips and the Bloods in the crack trade. We seek to ensure that triumph over La Cosa Nostra does not result in just turning over their illicit enterprises to new criminal entrepreneurs.

In the area of white collar crime -- "Crime in the Suites", who could have foreseen the explosion of activity that has taken place during the 1990s? The conviction of nearly 600 Savings and

Loan crooks, 79% of whom have gone to prison for their wrongdoing. The successful criminal prosecution of Michael Milken and Drexel Burnham Lambert, the very personifications of the "Greed Decade." Bringing to justice those defense contractors and corrupt officials who conspired to rip off the government until throttled by "Operation Ill Wind." And the regrettable and, unfortunately, continuing parade of those who betray the public trust -- corrupt judges, legislators and other elected and appointed public officials -- prosecuted in record numbers over the past three years.

Our newly-renamed Environment and Natural Resources Division has led a record-breaking assault on those who would pollute the world in which we live. They have amassed two consecutive years of billion-dollar recoveries in Superfund cases and turned the criminal law effectively against environmental depredations by some of our largest multi-national corporations.

Anti-trust efforts have been directed at ensuring all consumers the benefits of free competition in the market place. We have "gone international" to extend our reach, for example, into Japan, where successful actions against price-fixing produced \$60 million in penalties. At home, innovative efforts have legally halted price-fixing in areas such as college tuitions and medical services, and increased scrutiny over the airline industry.

In the field of civil rights, our Department spearheaded the effort to put the Americans With Disabilities Act on the books. The most important civil rights act passed by the Congress in the past 25 years, it empowers some 43 million citizens to enter the mainstream of American life. Stepped up activities in enforcing voting rights, housing discrimination and in desegregating our schools have also sent a strong signal of our determination to remove all remaining barriers to equal opportunity for all of our citizens through firm enforcement of our civil rights laws. And to combat the sickness of "hate crimes," violence and intimidation based on racial, ethnic or religious bigotry, we have expanded our prosecution efforts into twenty states, securing over 100 convictions.

Finally, we have assumed a new and expanded responsibility for dealing with violent crime, to help our state and local counterparts protect that first civil right of every American -- the right to be free from fear in our homes, on our streets and in our communities.

Our historic Crime Summit this spring -- attended by some 650 law enforcement officials, judges, community leaders and citizen representatives -- gave new impetus to the President's Comprehensive Violent Crime Bill. This bill, which will provide swift, sure and certain punishment to violent offenders, has now

been passed in large part by the Senate, and awaits action in the House of Representatives.

Our own "Project Triggerlock" and "Operation Weed and Seed" initiatives are designed to extend a further helping hand to those across the country who are seeking to "take back the streets" from violent predators and drug dealers. Too many of our good and law abiding citizens have seen their aspirations for a better quality of life imprisoned by fear of neighborhood violence induced by such illegal activity.

On the civil side, our litigators have shown not only that they are the world's biggest law firm, but one of the best as well. They have effectively protected the treasury from assault, while vigorously pressing claims against those who have wronged the United States.

Those then were the principal goals we set for ourselves three years ago and the giant steps we have made towards achieving them.

There were other goals -- lesser goals, to be sure -- that some of you will remember my setting forth. They included additional resources and personnel, better pay and an improved quality of worklife for our employees, clear and distinct ethical guidelines, a quarterly journal to highlight our intellectual

output, yes, even a spruced-up courtyard and a fully accessible Great Hall. These achievements, if only noticed in passing, can be a source of pride to us all as well.

But the world is changing. And new challenges abound. Nowhere will we be challenged more in these 1990s than in our international activities.

Many of our prosecutions these days reach far beyond our borders and take on new international dimensions -- and complications. Obviously, drug trafficking, money-laundering and fraudulent financial schemes cross international borders, but so do a variety of other wrongdoers. We are no longer dealing with stay-at-home criminals and the cause of justice must become more and more oriented toward an international venue. We must become, in a variety of ways, a world partner in international law enforcement and the administration of justice.

Over the past three years, we have moved rapidly to meet our new international responsibilities. In 1988, I was privileged to sign the United Nations Drug Convention in Vienna on behalf of the United States, and we have since worked, with 46 other signatories, to create a world-wide network in the war on drugs. We have also achieved, in Europe and elsewhere, a loosening of bank secrecy laws, so that, together with new money-laundering laws, prosecutors can have increased access to the financial

records and assets of such drug brigands as Manuel Noriega and the late Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez-Gacha. International cooperation has also been essential to our investigations into horrendous acts of terrorism, such as the downing of Pan Am Flight 103, a matter which I am assured will soon be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

At the same time, we are constantly being asked to consult on the Rule of Law around the world -- particularly on those constitutional guarantees of our freedom. We travel as guests to the Soviet Union -- a country deeply divided by halfway measures and breakaway republics -- to advise them on the structure of our federal system. Eastern Europe wishes to consult with our anti-trust experts on how to create a competitive economic structure. Everywhere, reformers express a strong desire to adopt our democratic institutions and imitate our free market economy for the immediate transformation of oppressed nations into free people. And our new Office of International Affairs is well positioned to aid and monitor all these activities.

Yes, there is much of which we can be proud. But it's a tough world out there and not all the cries have been hosannas. This Department is constantly at the center of controversy and we reap more than our share of carping and criticism.



At our bicentennial celebration of the Office of Attorney General in 1989, one of my predecessors, Herbert Brownell, who served President Eisenhower as Attorney General in the 1950s, put it quite well. He quoted a British Attorney General on the many legal nays we must say to the media, to legislators, and to fellow Cabinet members. "So the Attorney General becomes, to friend and foe alike, the bogeyman," Brownell continued quoting, "a popular target for popular commentators. What is absolutely certain" he concluded, "is that an Attorney General who becomes popular will not be doing responsibly that which his office demands."

Probably, for better or worse, I do pass that test of responsibility in office. I have sometimes been "a popular target for popular commentators." But I can abide that distinction secure in the knowledge that we have done our best to "call 'em as we see 'em," without fear or favor from any quarter, and to follow the evidence wherever and to whomever it may lead.

And now it is time for me to close this chapter in my life. Ginny and I leave tomorrow for a first-ever Thornburgh family reunion and then we return to my beloved Pennsylvania and an exciting campaign for the U.S. Senate. For a substantial part of my professional career, indeed, under each of our last five presidents, it has been my privilege to serve this Department -- as a United States Attorney, as an Assistant Attorney General

and, during these last three years, as Attorney General. I love and respect this institution as no other, and I love and respect the men and women who make it work. You have touched me with your loyalty, your industry and your friendship. I shall never forget you.

Thank you all, and may God bless you, this Department and all in this world who strive to achieve that which is good, and right, and just.

Farewell.