

ABC'S THIS WEEK WITH DAVID BRINKLEY
Guests: Attorney General Janet Reno, Los Angeles Police Chief
Willie Williams and Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa of Japan.
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ANNOUNCER: From ABC News, "This Week With David Brinkley." Now from our Washington headquarters, here's David Brinkley.

MR. BRINKLEY: In Los Angeles at Florence and Normandy Avenues where the riots began last year, there was a sort of street party

last night for the peaceful outcome of the Rodney King case. People gathered to celebrate, slap their hands together, and say thank you, Jesus; no violence, no windows smashed, and no looting.

Aside from the different juror verdict, two policemen convicted and two were not guilty, the system worked this time where it failed last time. Exactly why?

We'll ask today's guests, Willie Williams, the Los Angeles chief of police, Janet Reno, attorney general of the United States, and otherwise on a busy weekend, the prime minister of Japan, Kiichi Miyazawa, in Washington for a talk with President Clinton about problems of Japan selling to us but not buying from us.

The background on that from our man Jack Smith, and our discussion here with George Will, Cokie Roberts, and Barbara Walters--Sam Donaldson, off today--all here on our Sunday program.

(Background report is aired.)

MR. BRINKLEY: Chief Williams, thank you very much for coming in this early hour on the Pacific Coast, being with us.

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Good morning.

MR. BRINKLEY: Thank you for coming. Here in the studio with us in Washington are George Will and Cokie Roberts, both of ABC News.

Now, Chief, this time--unlike the last time--you announced in advance that you would have a formidable force of police arrayed around in the appropriate places. Is that why we got through it, you got through it, with no problems?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, I think it was several combinations. One, the message was sent out beginning several months ago that despite whatever the verdict was--guilty, innocent, or a combination, as ultimately occurred yesterday--that the Los Angeles police department and other law enforcement agencies would be out on the street in uniform going about their normal duties but in significantly increased numbers to ensure that opportunists did not have a second chance to loot and pillage this city. At the same time, we sent a message that our primary purpose in addition was to provide security and safety for the three and a half million people who live in this city.

The second reason that there were no problems is that the men and women who live in this city made a commitment that despite whatever the verdict would have been, if it were four acquittals, they were not going to allow the same type of looting and destruction to occur again.

MR. BRINKLEY: Plus the fact that you had 6,500 policemen out on the street.

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, that was something that I wish I could do everyday. Right now we have about 3,000 officers working on the morning watch and another three in the evening, and we're probably one of the small police departments in the country--but we made the commitment to put those numbers out.

MR. WILL: Now, Mr. Williams, let's try and apply the lesson to the future. In vast tracks of American cities, life is a slow motion riot from one end of the year to the other with violence and random shootings and all the rest. What you achieved this weekend seems to indicate that a heavy police presence, visible, and perhaps on the street--not just in squad cars--helps. Is there a lesson from this?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Oh, there are several lessons. We started our build-up last Saturday morning. Major crime, repressible crime, is down significantly--as much as 30 or 40 percent, in some areas over 60 percent--with increased visibility, answering 911 calls, going about their regular jobs but in increasing numbers.

It does say that increased uniform visibility on the streets can

have a major impact on repressible crime, and also it makes the community feel safer and reduces the fear of crime in our communities.

WILL: Now, I gather you feel that Los Angeles is 2,000 officers short of what you would call a bare-bones police capacity. Why, if domestic tranquility is the first business of government, isn't that being provided?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, the community finds it very, very difficult to raise the taxes necessary to provide the type of law enforcement that this community needs. There's a ballot measure Tuesday that would cost the taxpayers \$10 a month--that's all, \$10 a month--to add a thousand officers to this department. I mean, I've made the commitment to put those officers in uniform on the streets.

It's a difficult decision to raise taxes--nobody wants to pay them. But safety and security do cost and, hopefully, in this city this past week the citizens have seen what can occur when we add more officers and maybe we'll have a different outcome next Tuesday.

MS. ROBERTS: I'm wondering, Chief, what the morale is in your police department upon the conviction of two of their members. I was listening to one of the lawyers for one of the police officers who was found guilty this morning saying it was the entire police department on trial. If the jury is right that these men are guilty, then the entire police department is guilty. What do you say about that?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, first of all, I didn't hear that comment, but that lawyer's statements are absolutely wrong. Unfortunately, in the minds of many the entire police department was on trial, and that's what we're trying to separate.

There were four individual members of the Los Angeles police department of more than 10,000 civilian and sworn, and about 7,000 sworn. Four people were on trial, four people out of millions of police officers in the United States. The majority of the men and women in this department and others do their jobs day in and day out to the best of their ability. They make split-second decisions, they make the right decisions. If they make mistakes, they are taken into account. So the entire department was not on trial.

In terms of morale, morale is down in this department because of a number of things. They've lived with the Rodney King beating for two and a half years, they've lived with the disappointments of the response in the leadership last year during the riots, and they've lived with international notoriety. The media from all over the world looking over their shoulder, examining

everything they do, and they've lived without a contract for the last year and a half.

So all of these things have impacted on morale, but I believe the coming together of both the police department and its community yesterday has helped turn that corner, and morale is going to begin to come up. It's going to take a while, it's going to take time, but I believe we're on the up side now.

MS. ROBERTS: One of the other things that they are going to have to be living with is the increase of guns in the city.

Apparently, in the last few weeks the purchase of guns has gone way up, and you're still going to have those guns in people's hands now that this verdict is over.

CHIEF WILLIAMS: That's right, and that's one of my biggest fears. Too many of our communities have armed themselves to the teeth. And as I've tried to let our citizens know in the past few weeks, most people never ever use the guns that they purchase for the intent that they purchase those weapons. They end up being borrowed, lost, stolen, or, worst yet, used by a member of a family against another family member--a son, a daughter, a spouse, or a child.

Our biggest fear is that these guns in the hands of amateurs are going to raise the death count, raise the injury count, in our community. We're asking people to turn them in, to turn them back to the place that they purchased from, turn them into the police.

It's a long-term detrimental effect of the fear that's in this city.

MR. BRINKLEY: Chief, let me ask you a question that is more of history than current affairs. A year ago when the riot began, the police seemed to disappear. I'm not asking you to criticize your predecessor, but can you tell us why that happened?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: I think that that occurred, from my view of being here in Los Angeles a year--lack of planning, not the best leadership that there should have been, not recognizing that that trial was going to end, that there should have been maximum deployment on the streets, there should have been a discussion with the community prior to that decision so that the community accepted that decision as they did this time around, and I believe you would not have had the results.

You may still have had rioting, you may still have had some improper actions, but the community and law enforcement would have been able to deal with it up front in the beginning, and we would not have seen the results that we saw last year.

MR. BRINKLEY: Primarily, it was poor leadership and poor planning. Is that what you're saying?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: That's correct.

MR. WILL: Chief, I'd like to go back to the subject of gun control and ask you how severe you would be in advocating gun control.

And I'd like you to comment on one proposal made in all earnestness by Pat Moynihan repeatedly. He says: guns don't kill people, bullets do--let's ban ammunition of certain calibers used in the most common handguns. Do you see anything wrong with that?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, first of all, I'm a strong gun control advocate. I believe that most of the major rifles, AK-47s, we should ban the importation, as well as the domestic manufacturing of those weapons. They're only used to hunt human beings, not animals, if you are a hunter.

I'm not sure if just banning ammunition is an answer. It certainly is a start, but there's so much ammunition on our streets it would probably take twenty years before it would rot and no longer be useful. But if it works, I'll take it.

MR. WILL: Mr. Moynihan says we have a 200-year supply of guns and four-year supply of ammunition.

But on another matter, on the subject of violence, there's a lot of discussion nowadays about the correlation--and it may be a causation--the correlation between the spread of television, the rise of television and cinema violence, and the spread of violence in society. What is your instinct, not as a scholar, but as a practicing law enforcement officer about this correlation and perhaps causation?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: I'm not sure if I'm the expert in that area, but I believe that the more our young people particularly see violence on television, the more they see a lack of respect for women in America and young children, that they replicate that when they go to schools, they replicate that in their homes, they replicate that in their social environment.

So I believe that if we have more responsible television programming, more responsible movie making, less degradation in terms of the women in our society and others, that we can have a positive impact on crime in those areas.

MR. ROBERTS: Chief Williams, you have two more events coming up that could be a problem--the trial of Reginald Denney, the white truck driver, and the sentencing of these police officers.

First of all, are you concerned about those? And are you concerned that there seems to be an attitude in the community that the only just solution is for the people who beat Reginald

Denney to get off and for the police officers to get a harsh sentence?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, I'm not sure if that's the attitude in all Our Communities; as a matter of fact, I'm positive it's not.

There are some people that probably for the right reasons and the wrong reasons have made a correlation between the two events which certainly should be viewed separate and distinct. I believe this community, having lived through the events of the last 24 to 48 hours, can live through whatever the decisions are out of the Denney trial this summer or this fall. We have also learned that we can live through whatever the sentencing instructions and decisions are by the judge.

The real lesson to learn over this past week is that crisis will come and go in the city of Los Angeles, as it did in the way, but it will not lead necessarily and automatically to riots and destruction on our streets.

MR. ROBERTS: And the next time you will have a new mayor of the city of Los Angeles. Does that mean that you might not have to take quite such a high-profile position, or was this a comfortable position to be in, the hero of Los Angeles?

CHIEF WILLIAMS: Well, I'm not sure if that's the right title, but I'm very comfortable in that I've worked 30 years, the last five as chief, and it goes with the territory. But I'm certainly willing to share the responsibility and share some of the aggravation; there's plenty to go around.

MR. BRINKLEY: Well, Chief, you are now seen as a hero in Los Angeles, so if you want a word of advice from the East Coast, enjoy it while it lasts.

CHIEF WILLIAMS: I know--throw bouquets today and stones tomorrow.

MR. BRINKLEY: Thank you very much for being with us and for getting up so early. Nice of you to come.

Coming next, the new attorney general of the United States, Janet Reno, who made a reputation as a prosecutor, a law-and-order prosecutor, in Miami--in a moment.

(Announcements)

MR. BRINKLEY: Ms. Reno, do you like to be called "General"? That's the ordinary form of address for the attorney general. Do you like that? Do you want to be called "General"? What do you want us to call you?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No, I don't think that generals belong in the law, so Ms. Reno or Janet or "Hey, you" is fine.

MR. BRINKLEY: Ms. Reno, all right, thank you. We've cleared that up, whether we've cleared up anything else or not.

The period of presumed danger in Los Angeles ended with a gathering of 25 television cameras, people selling funny T-shirts, the great American artifact. What have we learned from the events out there? What do you gather from it?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think it's imperative that we now look to the future, and not rest on the fact that there has been peace on the streets of Los Angeles, but that there is concern throughout America, in communities throughout America, about violence, about children growing up in atmospheres that are not safe and healthy. I think youth violence is perhaps one of the most critical problems we face in America, and I think we have to join together--police officers, the thousands of sensitive, concerned police officers who are devoted to their community, devoted to their people, who are fair, working with others, delivering social and health services--to rather restitch the fabric of society around so many of our young people and those that feel left out.

MR. BRINKLEY: Well, we've just heard--you heard--Chief Williams say that one reason they avoided riots in Los Angeles was that he put an enormous number of police on the streets where they could be seen. Is that the answer?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that it's important, and have been so impressed with what Chief Williams is trying to do in terms of not only putting police officers on the streets, but putting police officers on the streets in a sensitive, thoughtful, firm way, that we're not going to brook violence but at the same time we're going to reach out and develop understanding and mutual trust with our communities. I think we can do that beyond just this effort. I think police officers can work with social workers and public health nurses to do so much in terms of addressing the problem of American families, of children in American families as a whole, and giving them an opportunity to get off to a fresh start, to become self-sufficient, to lead safe, constructive lives.

MR. WILL: As you know, many people, even in the American Civil Liberties Union, a lot of civil libertarians generally, are worried that the second trial constituted double jeopardy, that it violates the principle and the spirit of the principle that

you should not be subject to trial twice for the same offense.
Can you explain simply to our viewers why this wasn't double jeopardy?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: This wasn't double jeopardy because you have two different sovereigns. We addressed this issue in Miami on a number of occasions where federal authorities followed with a subsequent prosecution, and as the Supreme Court--as case law has evolved in this nation, you had two separate sovereigns and therefore it is not double jeopardy.

MR. WILL: On the subject of the federal sovereign, there seems to be an increasing tendency to federalize more and more offenses, and you're in favor I gather of something to protect abortion clinics. You said the following recently. You said "Just as there should be a federal remedy for racial and gender discrimination, somehow or other there has got to be a federal response to interference through physical conduct with a woman seeking a legal abortion." Why? Why must there be a federal response? Why can't, say, the state of Florida cope with these problems?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have been advised by law enforcement agents in Florida as well as around the nation that the problem extends beyond state lines, that there are coordinated efforts throughout the country to develop procedures for physically obstructing access to clinics. And where it crosses state lines, where there is a federal implication, I think it is appropriate. At the same time I think it is important for us to look at sentencing policies in America, look at charging policies, look at what is federal, what is state, and try to develop a coordinated approach in terms of sentencing, charging, what is state and what is federal responsibility to make sure that the limited resources of all governments are used in the most effective, fair manner possible.

MR. ROBERTS: You talked, in answer to George's questions about the two sovereigns--one the federal government, one the state--but in terms of that second trial, I think there was a lot of concern that the jury would be so influenced by the events that followed the first trial--53 people were killed in that riot--and the lawyers for the police officers are certainly saying that. One of them said today justice becomes popular opinion, and that's the downfall of the system.

Is that something that would concern you?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think people who say that underestimate the strength of American citizens and the strength of the American jury system. There may sometimes be a

mistake, but I think that the citizens of America who are sworn to uphold their duty in a jury setting are going to try to do their best to do that regardless of the consequences.

MR. ROBERTS: The other fact that is coming out of Los Angeles this morning is from Congresswoman Waters complaining that there are now 47,000 cases of police abuse sitting in your Justice Department unacted on. Will there now be more action on those cases?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We have said, since I took office, that we would review any case which remains open or in which someone has concerns about lack of federal action. And review it to determine if the investigation has been complete, and then make an appropriate judgment based on the evidence and the law.

MR. ROBERTS: But it's going to be a little bit hard at the moment, isn't it? The Justice Department is not exactly staffed up to capacity, is it? How are you doing on getting your appointments?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of the findings that I've made in the little over a month that I've been in office is that the American people should be extraordinarily proud of the career lawyers in the office--they're extraordinary, they're dedicated, they're fine lawyers who approach issues from a non-political point of view. There's tremendous strength and we're beginning to work on these issues.

MR. BRINKLEY: When do we get a new director of the FBI?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know whether we will get a new director of the FBI.

MR. BRINKLEY: When do we get a decision on Mr. Sessions staying or somebody else taking his place?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As soon as I complete a review, as soon as I make sure that I have thoroughly understood all the issues in the most objective, fair manner possible.

MR. BRINKLEY: Everyone should understand the FBI director works for you, that's why I raised the question.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Technically he may work for me, but the

president of the United States appoints him.

MR. BRINKLEY: Yes, but he works for you. George?

MR. WILL: The Clinton administration, rather more abruptly than most administrations, got rid of, as was their right, all U.S. attorneys, to replace them with Democrats. One effect of this was to decapitate the ongoing investigation of an ally of the president's, Chairman Rostenkowski, from Illinois.

Can you assure people that, this having happened, that that investigation will be carried on?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: First of all, we didn't get rid of all the U.S. attorneys. We're doing it in an orderly way like it's been done before.

Secondly, the people that I understand are conducting the Rostenkowski investigation are still there and are going strong.

MR. BRINKLEY: Thank you very much.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you.

MR. BRINKLEY: Thanks for being with us. Pleasure to have you, and you luck in your new job.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you, sir.

(unrelated exchanges with other guest follow) ...

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