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REMARKS OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
before the
GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON YOUTH VIOLENCE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Friday, August 20, 1993

Transcribed from the audio recording.

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PROCEEDINGS

1
2 VOICE: When we were planning this conference,
3 Governor Nelson asked Senator Kerrey to be the cochairman,
4 a Federal partner who could help us address the problem of
5 youth violence in the State. The Governor also asked the
6 Senator to help us get Attorney General Janet Reno to come
7 to the State for this conference.

8 And needless to say, the Senator came out with
9 flying colors. Please help me in welcoming U.S. Senator
10 Bob Kerrey.

11 (Applause.)

12 SENATOR KERREY: Attorney General Reno, I want
13 you to know that we had this thing sold out before we had
14 your commitment to come.

15 (Laughter.)

16 SENATOR KERREY: My honor and job here this
17 afternoon is to as briefly as possible introduce the
18 chairman of this conference, Governor Nelson.

19 Several months ago, as a consequence of growing
20 concern from stemming from working with children's
21 advocates here in Nebraska we, along with former Attorney
22 General Barr, put together a small working group of people
23 and began to explore the problem relating to the juvenile
24 justice system in the State of Nebraska.

25 One of the people that was there, Bill Nermberg,

1 a former juvenile justice judge in Lancaster County,
2 called the group back from a moment of great pessimism.
3 Anyone who has worked in this area at all finds themselves
4 sometimes, as least I do, feeling as if perhaps there's no
5 hope, perhaps there's no reason to continue to try.

6 And Bill Nermborg called us back. And here's a
7 man who has been involved in juvenile justice for 40
8 years. He called us back as pessimists, saying that if we
9 can't solve this problem, that if we can't make life
10 better for our children, then we're not worthy of being
11 called citizens of this country.

12 He called us back, I believe, with a challenge.
13 Not with a prescription, but merely with a challenge that
14 this is an obligation that we cannot fail to fulfill.

15 Governor Nelson has called this conference
16 together because he as well is challenging all of us at
17 the Federal level as well as the local level to fulfill
18 this obligation.

19 It is a great honor and privilege for me to be
20 able to introduce the chairman of this conference,
21 Governor Ben Nelson.

22 (Applause.)

23 GOVERNOR NELSON: Thank you very much, Bob.
24 It's really an honor to have such an opportunity to
25 welcome someone with the stature that United States

1 Attorney General Janet Reno brings to her office.

2 We're delighted to welcome you here to the State
3 of Nebraska. We're pleased that you're with us today to
4 share with us your thoughts on one of the most disturbing
5 and, unfortunately, growing problems haunting our society,
6 and that is violence among our youth.

7 In an address that you delivered before the
8 Coalition for Juvenile Justice in April, you made it very
9 clear that if we don't find the solutions to youth
10 violence we're not going to find a future for our country.

11 Among the things that you said was that what we
12 have at stake is not just one component, not just an adult
13 prosecutor, not just simply people who focus on juvenile
14 justice or people who focus on child development or people
15 who focus on what we have at stake on future issues.

16 And, Attorney General, we're delighted to say
17 that we've taken that to heart because in this conference
18 we recognize that as Americans, as Nebraskans, very often
19 we've taken a one-sided approach to solving our problems
20 rather than looking at it from a broader perspective.

21 And I, for one, want to thank you on behalf of
22 everyone in this conference for giving us the vision to
23 look broader rather than more narrowly on how to deal with
24 this problem.

25 You told us and you challenged us that we must

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1 look at every individual part. We must look beyond the
2 individual parts to see the whole problem to find the
3 solution to that problem.

4 So today, your presence here underscores not
5 only the importance of our doing this in Nebraska, but for
6 seeing that Nebraska is part of a larger society --
7 America. That what we're doing here can't be simply
8 limited to the State of Nebraska but must be a part, a
9 part of the national effort.

10 And so we're very delighted that you're here
11 today to give us your perspective on how this can be
12 handled not only at the State level and the community
13 level, but how together we can work to bring out a
14 national resolution of this problem.

15 And I want to thank Senator Kerry for your
16 efforts in bringing General Reno here to Nebraska, and for
17 your efforts in this project as well, and for continuing
18 to be an excellent partner in Washington so that we can
19 continue to work together.

20 Once again, ladies and gentlemen, I know we're
21 all honored to be able to welcome to Nebraska today the
22 former Dade County, Florida prosecutor and now the
23 Attorney General of the United States of America, Janet
24 Reno.

25 (Applause.)

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1 GENERAL RENO: Governor, Senator Kerrey, and to
2 all of you who I've just started meeting, thank you for
3 such a warm welcome.

4 When I see such warmth, when I see such hope,
5 when I meet people like Patrick and Matt and Tim, Tyrone
6 and Ryan, so many of you, I understand the special
7 responsibility I have. One of the things I've got to do
8 is translate talk into action. That's a hard thing to do.

9 (Applause.)

10 GENERAL RENO: To try to translate talk into
11 action without promising what we can't deliver, to do
12 something and to do it in real terms to help the American
13 people.

14 This is an extraordinarily great Nation. You
15 have no idea what its like, if you were minding your own
16 business 6 months ago thinking you were going to be a
17 prosecutor for another 4 years, and suddenly to have had
18 this great adventure in these last 6 months. And one of
19 the things that you come away with is a confirmation of
20 the strength, and the greatness, and the compassion of the
21 American people.

22 This is an extraordinary Nation, and the people
23 I've met day in and day out and every step of the way
24 affirm my faith in this Nation and its future,
25 particularly the youth that I have met.

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1 The young people of America are so wise. They
2 have such common sense. They don't have frills and
3 arbitrary notions. They haven't developed false
4 pretenses. They are real people and they have a great
5 message. The message is, we can make a difference if we
6 start trying, if we start working together, and if we
7 start using common sense.

8 (Applause.)

9 GENERAL RENO: I come here today to form a
10 partnership with the people of Nebraska. I want to try to
11 use the resources in the Department of Justice as wisely
12 as possible to work with you and the people of America in
13 getting resources to you in ways that you can use them
14 that can make a difference.

15 That's got to be a two-way street because
16 communities have a better sense of what they need and what
17 their resources are, so you have got to communicate with
18 the Federal Government in trying to devise a really solid
19 partnership.

20 I have not been so encouraged, I think, in all
21 my traveling. To have the mayor, Congressman Hoagland,
22 Senator Kerrey, and Governor Nelson all here, all levels
23 of government represented here, is one of the most
24 encouraging things that I've seen. And then when I see
25 all that you're doing throughout Nebraska, you may set an

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1 example for the Nation.

2 (Applause.)

3 GENERAL RENO: I think that youth violence is
4 the greatest single crime problem we face. And one of its
5 tragedies is that too many of its victims are youths
6 themselves. Addressing it will not be easy. There are no
7 simple answers. There are no short-term answers. But we
8 can make a difference.

9 If we look beyond our narrow disciplines, if the
10 prosecutor looks back to see where his defendants came
11 from, if social worker looks back to see where her
12 neglected child came from, if each of us looks beyond our
13 narrow focus to see what the problem is, if the
14 businessman understand that unless we all, business
15 included, start to focus on children today he's not going
16 to have the work force with the skills necessary to fill
17 the jobs to maintain America as a first rate Nation.

18 (Applause.)

19 GENERAL RENO: The elderly person who says,
20 look, I sent my son to college, my granddaughter to
21 college, and I even helped to try to send my great-
22 granddaughter to college, I've done enough for children --
23 their pension won't be worth the paper its written on
24 unless we have a work force that can fill the jobs to
25 maintain the Nation's economy and maintain that pension.

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1 We're all in this together. Republicans and
2 Democrats, business and the public sector, doctors and
3 lawyers. We can make a difference if we start talking
4 together and understanding that we can't wait for a crisis
5 to occur. We can't wait to build prisons. We can't wait
6 to put people into foster care. We've got to focus on the
7 front end and do something about prevention.

8 (Applause.)

9 GENERAL RENO: Approximately 9 years ago, a
10 friend died leaving me as the legal guardian of her 15-
11 year-old twins, a boy and a girl. And I've learned an
12 awful lot about raising children in the last 8 years. It
13 takes love, hard work, luck, and a lot of energy.

14 I have been fond of saying it is the single most
15 difficult job I ever do. It is also the most rewarding.
16 But I think maybe being a child in America today may be
17 more difficult than raising children.

18 (Applause.)

19 GENERAL RENO: What I have learned is that being
20 a good parent and having success as a child requires that
21 that child be loved, that that child have guidance, that
22 that child have limits and understanding of what they can
23 and can't do, and then if cross those limits they get
24 punished but that the punishment is fair, it's reasonable,
25 and it fits the crime. And that after the child is

1 punished, punishment by itself won't do it. The parent
2 has to move in and let that child know that he or she is
3 loved.

4 There are too many children in America who are
5 going without the love, guidance, punishment, and an
6 opportunity to be loved again, and we have got to change
7 that.

8 A long time ago as a prosecutor I thought, let
9 me do something to find out the cause. So, I started
10 focusing on 16 and 17-year-olds charged with serious
11 crimes. And I realized that we would never have enough
12 dollars to change all those 16 and 17-year-olds if we
13 waited until they had two prior adjudications for
14 delinquency, until they had dropped out of school, until
15 they had gone through so terribly much in growing up.

16 So, I started focusing on what we could do about
17 dropout prevention through the grand jury and dropout
18 programs for 12 and 13-year-olds. That's too late.
19 Already they had fallen behind two grade levels, they lost
20 self esteem. We can never catch up for all the similarly
21 situated.

22 So, I started looking at 4 and 5-year-olds in
23 early intervention programs. But then the crack epidemic
24 hit Miami in 1985, and the doctors took me to the public
25 hospital to figure out what to do about crack involved

1 babies and their mothers. And I began to understand that
2 you have got to make the investment up front. There is no
3 one point where you can intervene along the way.

4 And the most profound lesson that I learned, and
5 one that I want to continue to work with you on, is that 0
6 to 3 is the most formative time in a person's life.
7 Nobody disputes the fact that 50 percent of all learned
8 human response is learned in the first year of life.

9 What difference does it make in the educational
10 opportunity we provide for a child at risk 15 years from
11 now if they never got the bedrock of learning in that
12 first year? The concept of reward and punishment. The
13 conscience is developed during the years of 0 to 3. What
14 good are all the prisons we fill when at 18 a child
15 doesn't understand what punishment means and is totally
16 lacking in remorse when they commit a crime? We have got
17 to make an investment from 0 to 3.

18 (Applause.)

19 GENERAL RENO: And thus, our response to youth
20 violence can't be single shot demagoguery. It's got to be
21 what you're doing in Nebraska -- looking at the whole
22 picture. It's going to require Federal agencies in
23 Washington coming together.

24 I came to the Department of Justice and I found
25 it has a Weed and Seed Program, and an Office of Juvenile

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1 Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and it has a Bureau of
2 Justice Assistance, and it has this grant and that grant,
3 and it has more strings tied to it than anything I've ever
4 seen, sometimes by the bureaucrats and sometimes by
5 Congress.

6 I then started talking to the other agencies.
7 They have the same problem. So, we've gotten together. I
8 convened a meeting with the Secretary of HHS, of
9 Education, of Labor, someone from OMB, someone from HUD,
10 and the Department of Justice, and we sat down together.
11 And we said, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could weave
12 these agencies together so that when that we came to the
13 community, we came as a comprehensive package and people
14 didn't have to shop from agency to agency?

15 And then we all started talking about our
16 experiences in our community. Too often, we've been
17 sitting at a table in a community in Miami when the
18 Federal Government came to town saying, this is the way
19 you've got to do it if you want our money. And the way
20 they told us we had to do it wasn't the way it should be
21 done consistent with our resources.

22 (Applause.)

23 GENERAL RENO: I also saw communities that were
24 scattered all over the road map. They hadn't gotten their
25 act together. And that's the reason I think Nebraska is

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1 ahead of the game. It looks like you're coming together
2 to plan for your State and for Omaha on what's needed to
3 address the problem in a comprehensive way.

4 And that's how we can develop that partnership
5 with the Federal Government trying to figure out how we
6 can provide flexible support for communities based on
7 community's needs and resources.

8 Representative Hoagland came to see me about 3
9 or 4 weeks ago and he said, okay, what are you going to
10 do? And I told him, well, I was coming to Nebraska and I
11 was going to have better words for it.

12 Representative Hoagland, what we're trying to do
13 now and as it begins to take shape is, if we can meet with
14 people and talk with people and start doing with what we
15 have without seeking great new proposals, we may begin to
16 make a difference. And I'm here to pledge to you that
17 partnership in working with you, first in the Department
18 of Justice, and then in trying to involve the other
19 agencies to make sure we come together to address this
20 problem.

21 We need to develop a team approach. Social
22 workers, police officers, educators working together. We
23 need to involve the private sector because they have an
24 absolutely critical involvement in this effort.

25 We need to understand the strength of

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1 volunteers. One of the scenes I will remember for as long
2 as I live is of a meeting I attended in Miami where an old
3 man got up and he said, do you know how old I am and what
4 I do three mornings a week for 3 hours each morning? I
5 said, no. He said, I'm 84 years old, and I volunteer as a
6 teacher's aid for a first grade teacher.

7 And the lady next to him was a young woman who
8 stood up and she said, I'm the first grade teacher for
9 whom he volunteers. And the gifted kids can't wait for
10 their time with him because he can do so much for them
11 than I can with my 30 children in this class. And the
12 children with learning disabilities can't wait for their
13 time with him because he is so incredibly patient.

14 Each one of us, if we reach out and care, can
15 make a difference.

16 (Applause.)

17 GENERAL RENO: Now, lawyers like to take people
18 to court. When they talk about pro bono service, they
19 like to think about what they can solve in court. But no
20 lawyer I've ever met thought his client was better off
21 going to court than getting the problem resolved before he
22 got to court.

23 (Applause.)

24 GENERAL RENO: And why don't the lawyers all
25 throughout America, instead of hauling everybody off to

1 court, come and adopt a block, adopt a first grade, adopt
2 a student, make a difference, become an advocate, keep a
3 kid out of trouble.

4 (Applause.)

5 GENERAL RENO: Now, doctors, I'm not going to
6 let you off the hook either.

7 (Laughter.)

8 GENERAL RENO: We can all make a difference. I
9 just had a young lady that I've been mentoring for the
10 last 4 years come to Washington to start her first year in
11 college, and it makes me so proud to see what she can do.

12 But doctors, social workers, the teacher who
13 spends an extra hour after school, all of us can reach out
14 and make a difference. We've got to focus on the
15 prevention aspect and not the crisis aspect. We have got
16 to make our laws flexible enough.

17 And do you know what we've got to do? We've got
18 to convince all us politicians that we can trust the
19 people. We spend more time determining whether somebody
20 is eligible for a service than we do in providing them a
21 service.

22 (Applause.)

23 GENERAL RENO: Let's trust the people and move
24 ahead, because we can do the job. It's not easy. It's
25 frustrating. I'll be back here and next year and you're

1 going to be saying, now why haven't you done more? And
2 the media is going to be asking me, well, what have done
3 this week and what have you done that week? And people
4 are going to get frustrated, and we're going to take two
5 steps back before we have five steps forward.

6 And if we start investing in a person 3 years
7 old now, we're not going to see tangible results that can
8 make people convinced that we're doing the right job for
9 another 10 years. The answers aren't easy, but we've got
10 to make that commitment.

11 It's just like raising children. You don't know
12 what the results are going to be as you go through the
13 pitfalls along the way. But we can do it, ladies and
14 gentlemen, if we adopt a national agenda for children.
15 One that understands that there is no single answer, that
16 there is no key intervention point along the way to
17 prevent youth violence, to prevent drug abuse, to prevent
18 teen pregnancy, but working together we can make a
19 difference.

20 And where do we begin? By making sure that our
21 parents are old enough, wise enough, and financially able
22 enough to take care of their children.

23 (Applause.)

24 GENERAL RENO: There are so many youngsters who
25 have gotten pregnant that wanted a future that keep

1 getting beaten down. Let's give them an opportunity.
2 Let's develop programs. Let's go after the issue of teen
3 pregnancy, face up to it, use common sense approaches, and
4 make a difference.

5 Let us make sure that our parents have the
6 skills necessary to raise children. Again, the single
7 most difficult job I know. We teach people so many
8 different things in high schools, but what do we teach
9 them about raising children?

10 And most of all, let's give our parents time to
11 be parents. I remember my afternoons after school and in
12 the evenings and during the summertime. My mother worked
13 in the home. She taught me how to play baseball, to bake
14 a cake, to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies, and she
15 taught me her favorite poets. She taught my brothers and
16 sisters and I so much. She spanked the living daylights
17 out of us, and she loved us with all her heart. And there
18 is no child care in the world that ever will be a
19 substitute for what that lady was in our lives.

20 (Applause.)

21 GENERAL RENO: And yet I look at young people
22 today struggling to get to work, to make ends meet.
23 Somehow or another we are going to have to design our
24 workplaces so that families come first.

25 (Applause.)

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1 GENERAL RENO: We've got to make sure that our
2 children have proper medical care. Every doctor I've ever
3 talked to says that prenatal care is one single thing you
4 can do to improve the chances of good health for the
5 future.

6 We've got to make sure that every pregnant woman
7 in Nebraska and in America has prenatal care, that every
8 single child in America has current immunization, that
9 they get preventative medical care.

10 Something is terribly wrong with a nation that
11 says to a 70-year-old person, you can have an operation
12 that extends your life expectancy by 3 years, and yet to a
13 child of a working poor person that makes too much money
14 to be eligible for Medicaid but doesn't have health care
15 benefits, sorry, your child can't get decent medical care
16 that can prevent a lot of problems down the line. Let's
17 make a difference.

18 (Applause.)

19 GENERAL RENO: We've got to assure all our
20 children, no matter their age, that they can get drug
21 treatment. Something is terribly wrong with a nation that
22 says to a person who has five stiff drinks and piles into
23 a car and kills two people and breaks his two arms, you
24 can get your two arms set at the public hospital tonight
25 even if you don't have insurance, even if you don't have

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1 money, but the person is standing in line waiting for drug
2 treatment. We've got to change that.

3 (Applause.)

4 GENERAL RENO: We have got to remember that 0 to
5 3 are the most formative years, and we have got to make
6 sure that for those children who are left to child care or
7 who are not properly supervised that we have safe,
8 instructive educare that can focus on those years and give
9 them the nurturing and formation.

10 We've got to reweave the fabric of society
11 around those children, and we can do so and make a
12 difference, and blend it in to expand it, and improve Head
13 Start so that we give to our schools children who have the
14 full capacity to learn. And then we've got to free our
15 teacher's time to teach, so that they can teach our
16 children, give them interesting subjects, make the world
17 of education come alive, motivate them, encourage them,
18 and give them a pat on the back.

19 I remember my school teachers and they opened up
20 horizons that I still find marvelous. I didn't know
21 anything about music and they could teach me music. I
22 didn't know anything about Rome and they could teach me
23 about Rome. I talked to a young man the other day who I
24 met at through the program on youth violence. He said,
25 I'm going to a Boys Club, but I wish the Boys Club had

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1 something on Japan because I find that fascinating and I'd
2 like to learn more about Japan. Let's open up the world
3 to our children.

4 Let's enable children to do what my mother once
5 said to at PTA now 45 years ago. She said to my brother's
6 and sister's and my teacher, thank you for sending them
7 home with stars in their eyes. We've got to give our
8 teachers time to do that.

9 (Applause.)

10 GENERAL RENO: And that means freeing them from
11 all the burdens that we've placed on them to deal with the
12 problems that don't relate to education by developing full
13 service schools, by providing better counseling programs,
14 by blending the health and human service organizations of
15 this country with the schools so that everybody is doing
16 what they're best equipped to do.

17 We've got to focus on afternoons and in the
18 evening and think what we could do in terms of saving
19 children from disaster if they had organized programs that
20 could interest them and involve them in those times.

21 We have got to focus on our schools and make
22 sure that our schools develop children's skills. We
23 should look at aptitude and interest, and make sure that
24 the school education programs, school work experience
25 programs, after school and summer job programs blend

1 together so that that child knows that if they follow the
2 path that's been outlined they can graduate with the skill
3 that can enable them to earn a living wage.

4 We should require that skill as a condition of
5 graduation. We require so much now, but why not a skill
6 that enables them to earn a living wage? And you say,
7 well, I'm going on to college. But how many college
8 graduates do you know that are sitting there with a B.A.
9 in English Lit that can't find a job? We can make a
10 difference if we start focusing on common sense ways to
11 use our education that give our children a chance to be
12 self sufficient upon graduation, and then a further chance
13 to expand their horizons.

14 But as we deal with youngsters, we've got to
15 learn to talk to them. I met with some former gang
16 members, about 12 in number, in Los Angeles recently.
17 They had been through a lot. They had committed some
18 serious crimes. They had been to prison and they had come
19 out and were now trying to retrieve others from gangs.

20 They were trying to teach law enforcement
21 officers how to talk to gang members to prevent people
22 from getting further involved. And the one common theme
23 they told me was, you've got to learn to talk to us.
24 Police officers, teachers keep putting us down. We need a
25 pat on the back every now and then. If we do wrong we

1 know we should be punished, but we've got to be treated
2 with some respect, some understanding.

3 Growing up in America is the single most
4 difficult job. And if we just remember how we talk to our
5 youngsters and how important that pat on the back is,
6 combined with proper, fair punishment and a good measure
7 of respect we can make such a difference.

8 (Applause.)

9 GENERAL RENO: We've got to understand that our
10 children must be safe and to address that that issue
11 begins with the home. The child that watches his father
12 hit his mother comes to accept violence as a way of life,
13 and we've got to interrupt that cycle.

14 (Applause.)

15 GENERAL RENO: We have seen too many instances
16 and too many stories of violence handed down from one
17 generation to another through domestic violence, through
18 child abuse, and we have got to stop it now. Stop it
19 through the development of programs in our prosecutors'
20 offices where prosecutors and police work together in
21 focusing on effective efforts against domestic violence.

22 Judges throughout this land are going to have to
23 understand how epidemic it is and that the court system
24 can have a good, proper, and constructive role in it, and
25 that it should not be tolerated.

1 (Applause.)

2 GENERAL RENO: We have got to focus on child
3 abuse and developing children's centers where victims of
4 child abuse can come and feel unthreatened and participate
5 in the court system. Doctors in the emergency room,
6 general practitioners have got to stop turning their face
7 from what actually happened when they sew up somebody who
8 has a black eye, and start referring her for counseling
9 when they know darn good and well what happened and they
10 just ignore it. We can make a difference.

11 We can make a difference in our schools with
12 violence reduction programs, teaching our children to
13 resolve conflicts peacefully. You have program in
14 Nebraska that has done so much in terms of teaching
15 children not to use drugs. We can do the same thing with
16 violence.

17 You can do so much in terms of truancy
18 prevention. Too often a police officer will pick up the
19 kid, truant at 9 or 10, take him to the school, the school
20 calls mother, mother doesn't come to get him. The
21 principal, because he has nothing else to do, sends him on
22 the bus. What would happen if a social worker, the public
23 health nurse, and a police officer went together to find
24 out why that child was truant and why the mother didn't
25 respond?

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1 (Applause.)

2 GENERAL RENO: This fall, when Congress returns,
3 a crime bill will be introduced that will provide much
4 needed assistance for communities throughout America. It
5 will provide for up to 50,000 community police officers,
6 and ways that I want to make sure will help communities
7 develop community policing programs that meet your needs,
8 not what Washington thinks should be done. A safe school
9 initiative that will provide greater security in the
10 schools through aid to schools for officers and in public
11 housing projects.

12 We need to get that crime bill passed. It can
13 make a difference. It is one step, but it can make a
14 difference. And as part of that crime bill, we have got
15 to get the Brady Bill passed. We have got to ban assault
16 weapons now.

17 (Applause.)

18 GENERAL RENO: Somebody said the NRA doesn't
19 like you. I didn't get into this business to be liked.
20 But one of the things that I think is important for us to
21 understand -- I used to be called to debate the NRA in
22 Miami, and I found there is a reason wing and a nonreason
23 wing. Let us join together in understanding that labels
24 don't apply here; that there is no purpose whatsoever for
25 an assault weapon not used for sporting purposes except to

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1 kill people, and that we should not tolerate it.

2 (Applause.)

3 GENERAL RENO: And let us send a message through
4 advertisers throughout America as to what we would like on
5 TV afternoons and in the evening.

6 (Applause.)

7 GENERAL RENO: Let us send the clear message
8 that I am hearing throughout America, that we're sick and
9 tired of violence. And not only should we eliminate
10 violence. The TV can be such a marvelous educational
11 medium. Let's develop some positive, wonderful
12 programming for hours when our children can be affected.

13 (Applause.)

14 GENERAL RENO: I'm an old sentimentalist. I
15 like the Sound of Music. I think that was my favorite
16 movie. And I guess I just would like that kind of
17 programming in the afternoons and the evening, but we can
18 have some variations.

19 (Laughter.)

20 GENERAL RENO: Let us understand how important
21 neighborhoods are. You're seeing it here in your public
22 housing efforts, where you're trying to reweave the fabric
23 of society. Think of what we could do, as we did in a
24 small area of Miami, by taking a social worker, a public
25 health nurse, and a community-friendly, highly respected

1 police officer who focused on a small neighborhood family-
2 by-family, addressing the families needs as a whole.
3 Again, we will make a difference.

4 But most of all, we've got to challenge our
5 youngsters. Challenge them to think that there is a
6 future in America, that they can be great, that they can
7 participate, that they can make a difference.

8 I remember my mother's stories of the Depression
9 and of the men who worked in the Civilian Conservation
10 Corps. You see the monuments throughout America to what
11 those young men contributed. And I remember World War II,
12 when my aunt, an Army nurse, went off to war behind
13 Patton's army in North Africa, and my other aunt, a
14 Women's Army Service Pilot towed targets and ferried
15 bombs. And when they came home in their uniforms they
16 were heroines to me, and I thought they were magnificent.

17 And I watched young people go half-way around
18 the world in John Kennedy's Peace Corps. We've got to
19 give our young people, through the National Service
20 effort, an opportunity to serve America and to be someone.

21 Can you imagine what it would be like if we took
22 all the energies that are involved in gangs, all the sense
23 that's in gangs, all the effort that is involved in gangs,
24 all the abilities that are involved in gangs and got them
25 going in the right direction? We would be something.

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1 (Applause.)

2 GENERAL RENO: But we've got to understanding
3 that even if we do all that, we're going to fail
4 sometimes. But when we do, we've got to have a juvenile
5 justice system that steps in quickly, that does a proper
6 evaluation and assessment without labeling the child, that
7 lets any 14 or 15-year-old know that there's no excuse,
8 not poverty, not broken homes, for putting a gun up beside
9 somebody's head and they're going to be punished if they
10 do it.

11 (Applause.)

12 GENERAL RENO: That punishment should be fair,
13 it should be firm, and it should be certain. But that
14 child's going to get out of the punishment probably in a
15 year, 2 years, 3 years, maybe 5 years, but they're coming
16 back to this community. And they won't succeed if they
17 come back without support, without job training, without
18 an opportunity to get off on the right foot, without that
19 albatross from their past behind them around their necks.

20 We have got to give them the love, the guidance,
21 the punishment, and the opportunity to return that most
22 children in America have.

23 (Applause.)

24 GENERAL RENO: We cannot sacrifice a generation.
25 It is not simple. To make this work is going to take a

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1 long time, because you're talking about a child's life and
2 you're talking about some children who have been severely
3 damaged along the way. We have got to reweave the fabric
4 of society around them and let them know you're with them
5 every step of the way.

6 What can we do? Yes, the lawyer can make a
7 difference, the doctor, the attorney general, all of us
8 can make a difference. But where we can make the most
9 difference is to understand that the best care-giver of
10 all for a child is the family. And it's best said by the
11 last three verses of the book of Malachi of the Old
12 Testament.

13 And behold, I shall send you the Prophet Elijah
14 before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the
15 Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the father to the
16 children and the children's hearts to their father, lest I
17 come down and smite the earth with a curse.

18 (Applause.)

19 (Whereupon, the recording ended.)

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