



CNN AMERICA, INC.
The CNN Building
820 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 898-7900

LATE EDITION

AIR TIMES: Sunday, April 30, 1995; 5:00 PM ET

ORINATION: Washington, DC

TOPIC: The Crackdown on Terrorism

GUESTS: JANET RENO
U.S. Attorney General

SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER (R-Pennsylvania)
Intelligence Committee Chairman

ROUNDTABLE: Mara Liasson, National Public Radio
Jack Nelson, Los Angeles Times
Michael Barone, U.S. News & World Report

INTERVIEWED BY: Frank Sesno

SENIOR PRODUCER: Jack Smith

VICE PRESIDENT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
WEEKEND INTERVIEW PROGRAMS: Richard Davis

CONDITION OF USE: Credit "Late Edition" (CNN)

EDITOR: This is a rush transcript provided for the information and convenience of the press. Print and broadcast media are permitted to quote this transcript provided credit is given to "Late Edition" (CNN). Video and audio cassettes are available upon request to the media. For further information, please CNN Press Relations at (202) 515-2924.

(c) Copyright 1995, Cable News Network, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE (202) 347-1400

MR. SESNO: It's been 11 days since the Oklahoma City bombing. What's the latest on the investigation, and what's being done to prevent a terror attack like Oklahoma City from happening again? We will speak with the attorney general of the United States and with the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee straight ahead on Late Edition.

ANNOUNCER: Live from CNN in Washington, this is Late Edition with Frank Sesno.

MR. SESNO: It's Sunday, April 30th, 1995. Welcome to Late Edition, where we talk to the people at the top of the news and take your phone calls. Today, in the aftermath of the tragedy in Oklahoma City, the debate has turned to how we prevent this sort of thing from happening again. We'll have Q&A with Attorney General Janet Reno and we'll get an update on the FBI's investigation and hear what the administration proposes to do to fight terrorism in the future. Also, a perspective from Capitol Hill; we'll speak with Senator Arlen Specter, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Later, we'll go 'round the table on the political fallout from Oklahoma City. And finally today, Bruce Morton has our last word on the FBI and searching for terrorists. Can it go too far?

But first to Jeanne Meserve at the news desk for a look at the day's top stories. Jeanne?

MS. MESERVE: Thanks, Frank. Checking the top stories at this hour, the child known as Baby Richard is being turned over to the biological father he has never met. The birth father, Otto Kirschner (sp), filed for custody after learning of his son from the child's mother, whom he had left. The couple have since married. A lawyer for the boy's adoptive parents says the boy and his birth father are meeting for the first time ever today.

Vietnam marked the 20th anniversary of national unification, looking ahead to prosperity, hoping for economic help from its former enemy, the United States. Ten thousand people marched through downtown Ho Chi Minh City, called Saigon when it was capital of American-supported South Vietnam. Twenty years ago, communist tanks rolled through these same streets, ending decades of conflict between the North and South. It also marked the end of American involvement in Vietnam, the nation's first major military failure. Under gray skies, people gathered at Washington's Vietnam memorial, inscribed with the names of 58,000 Americans who died in Southeast Asia.

WILLIAM COLBY (FORMER CIA DIRECTOR): (From videotape.) If there were a wall for the other Southeast Asians who died in that war, it would be much, much longer. There are many more who fought for freedom, who fought to keep themselves free. Unfortunately, the war ended badly. Actually, the communists won the war and then proceeded to lose the peace, and they're trying to come out of that at this point. I think many of us are very happy to see Vietnam opening up because we see a possibility for freedom for the Vietnamese down the road a bit.

MS. MESERVE: Buddhist monks have begun a hunger strike across from the White House to protest Vietnam's alleged religious discrimination. They say U.S. recognition and aid to Vietnam should be tied to improvement of Hanoi's human rights record. We'll have much more on the war and its aftermath in a two-and-a-half-hour special, "Vietnam: Coming To Terms," tonight at 8:00 Eastern. That is 5:00 Pacific.

More grim news came today for rescue workers in Oklahoma City. Officials learned that an additional

four small children are believed to have been inside the building when the bomb exploded 11 days ago. Back in Washington, lawmakers decried anti-government violence and the use of hate speech.

SEN. BILL BRADLEY (D-NJ): (From videotape.) Whenever we hear hatred spewed, we have to counter it. Whenever we hear bigotry expressed, we have to challenge it. Whenever we hear gross falsehood stated over and over again, they cannot be allowed to stand.

SEN. PHIL GRAMM (R-TX): (From videotape.) I think many times people who are on talk shows -- who, after all, make a living by being provocative -- I think in some cases people go too far. And I think everybody needs to try to work to deal with that. But those who commit acts of violence, it seems to me, should not be able to find an excuse for that by blaming society.

MS. MESERVE: Meanwhile, a nationwide manhunt is still on for John Doe II. CNN will have more on the investigation in a few minutes when Attorney General Janet Reno joins Frank Sesno for Late Edition.

Thousands of Rwandans are being trucked back to their village homes today as the government shuts down the last refugee camps. Those sent home are survivors of last week's massacre that left thousands dead. They return amid reports that 14 survivors were stoned and beaten to death by their former neighbors. They were accused of being among the Hutu soldiers linked to ethnic blood-letting a year ago.

Hundreds gathered at the former Nazi concentration camp in Dachau, Germany today. Former deportees and veterans commemorated the 50th anniversary of its liberation in World War II. Dachau, just outside of Munich, was one of the first death camps opened and one of the last liberated. Gassing experiments were first introduced at Dachau. According to the camp, 32,000 prisoners died there. Witnesses say hundreds of other executions were never recorded.

And that's a look at the top stories at this hour. Now back to Frank Sesno and Late Edition. Frank?

MR. SESNO: Thanks, Jeanne.

Well, the investigation into the Oklahoma City bombing continues this weekend with the focus still very much on apprehending suspect John Doe II. A short while ago I sat down for an interview with Attorney General Janet Reno.

Attorney General Reno, thanks for coming in today. The American people have been told that John Doe II is armed, dangerous and still at large. Can you tell Americans today that law enforcement authorities are any closer to capturing him?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I obviously can't discuss what we are doing and how close we are, because that would give information concerning the investigation that would be disruptive and not productive of a good, solid investigation. But the FBI, other federal agencies, are working together as never before. The U.S. attorneys' offices across the country are cooperating. And I have great confidence that the Bureau and all involved will bring him to justice.

MR. SESNO: There have been suggestions that John Doe II may have been in the process of thinking

about other bombings. Do you believe that's a real danger and threat?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What we want to do is to pursue every possible lead to ensure that we take steps to prevent any further terrorism. And as we are trying to bring people to justice, we are also trying to take every step we can to ensure the prevention of further terrorism.

MR. SESNO: Is there a danger that this person may be involved in planning or executing additional terrorist attacks?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We can't speculate on that, but -- I mean, publicly -- but one of the most important things is that we not close any doors and that we take every step that is conceivably possible under the law and that's proper under the law to prevent such future acts.

MR. SESNO: I guess the question is this: Should people who have been watching this whole series of events over these last several days, should people be concerned for their own safety perhaps, that somewhere out in the heartland there could be another one of these horrible incidents by this individual?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: When we saw what happened in Oklahoma City, I think it is important for us all to take every reasonable precaution consistent with the law to prevent such acts for the future.

MR. SESNO: Is progress being made?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think extraordinary progress is being made.

MR. SESNO: Does that suggest, then, that you know where this person -- who this person is or where this person may be?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Again, I can't talk about any of the evidence because that just would not be consistent with conducting the investigation in the right way.

MR. SESNO: The Washington Post and others have reported this morning that there was another person who has been identified by a witness, by somebody who delivered Chinese food to this motel room, described as having longer hair and a fuller face. Is this individual, in fact -- does this individual exist? Is this another person whom you are searching?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Again, we would not in any way comment on newspaper accounts. We have got to conduct this investigation based on the evidence as it unfolds. It is very important that we pursue every lead, and we're going to continue to try to do so.

MR. SESNO: You're relying on the American public through this FBI hotline, though, for help and advice. The people need to know, presumably, who you're looking for so they know who they should be looking for. Is there any additional information, any additional guidance that you would give to the American public today in terms of who they should be on the lookout for?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What is important is, as the whole matter unfolded -- people, for example, asked

us early on, "Why haven't you given information as to who to call?" because you've got to carefully refine it so that you get the information that can be helpful. And the FBI will pursue every lead. It will use every tool, including advising the American people when it has specific information that we need the response that we've gotten. The response from the American people in connection with the reward, in connection with information, has just been remarkable. But it has been helpful because we have been able to say this is what we need because we know what evidence we have.

MR. SESNO: Is it your operating assumption that Timothy McVeigh is even remotely likely to have been the mastermind behind this bombing, or do you believe that John Doe II or others, those who are still at large, were the real masterminds behind this?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think it is very important not to speculate. I think what we have got to do is make sure that we look at every lead, every piece of evidence, the involvement of all, to make sure that we leave no stone unturned and that we pursue absolutely every person involved.

MR. SESNO: Is there increased surveillance now of militia groups and others that have been named that may or may not have some connection with this?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What is important is that when law enforcement take action, it not take action against those that just hold beliefs, but only against those who are going to produce violence. And I think that the FBI and the law enforcement agencies that are involved are trying to take every reasonable step, recognizing the constitutional rights of all Americans, while at the same time taking steps to prevent further violence and to hold those responsible for violence accountable.

I think it's important for -- and it's been interesting to hear the calls that we've gotten saying, "Why does the press keep asking you about details of the investigation? Don't they know that you really shouldn't talk about it because you might tip somebody off?" I think it's so important that we pursue the investigation in a proper way, that we not talk about details that could prejudice the investigation, and that we continue our efforts to ensure that no stone is left unturned.

MR. SESNO: Let's turn, then, to some of the -- some areas where you can speak more freely and more publicly. And let the record show that it's our job to ask the questions, even as it's your job not to answer them all the time.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: As you know, every Thursday morning I'm there available because I do think you have a responsibility to ask the questions. And I just want to make sure that I try to be as accessible as I can while at the same time making sure that investigations are conducted in a professional, right way.

MR. SESNO: The administration and the Congress is looking -- both are looking into ways to expand the power and the authority to pursue some of these suspected terrorists, domestic or international, whether it's through a counterterrorism center or some additional authority to pursue travel records, credit card records, even telephone taps and the like. But in a poll that we took, we asked the following question: "In order to combat terrorism, do you think the federal government should be given more powers to investigate U.S. citizens or do you think the government already has enough power?" Only 33 percent said they felt the government should have more power; 61 percent said the government already had enough power. Do you believe that there's a problem here in terms

of credibility or trust from the public? Or is the public just misinformed?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think what the -- because I would feel the same way. I don't want people investigating me if I haven't done anything wrong. And I think the government has enough tools to investigate me. What I think the public wants is to make sure that law enforcement pursues any evidence of terrorism, the possibility of terrorism, in a way that is consistent with the Constitution, in a way that respects the individual rights of all involved, and that when they see a particular provision that needs adjusting to conform to other processes that are already available, they will understand that. What we're dedicated to trying to do is to make sure that we have the people, that we have the coordination, that we have the funds necessary to pursue appropriate leads with appropriate tools. And I think that's what the American people want.

MR. SESNO: What do you need most now from the Congress in terms of changed guidelines, rules, laws, regulations, to pursue this?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think what is so important is the development of a counterterrorism center that can bring together law enforcement, bring it together so that it can pursue investigations, recognizing the constitutional rights of all involved, making sure that people understand they have the right to join groups and state beliefs, but that they don't have a right to pervade violence across this country. I think it is important that we have the staff to go with that, and the president has recommended a budget increase that would provide for additional prosecutors, FBI agents and other experts.

I think it is important that we develop the laboratory facilities necessary to support such efforts, that we have a fund that can respond, such as we have been trying to do here in cases of further instances of terrorism, and that we all work together to make sure that -- and that the administration will be working with the Congress to make sure that we pursue these leads the right way.

MR. SESNO: Part of what the president wants has concerned civil libertarians out there, as you well know. One of the provisions is the change in the so-called posse comitatus, which would allow in this case, under this scenario, cooperation between military and civilian authorities. Civil libertarians say that would be a dreadful mistake. That would be crossing the line, in a sense, at least beginning to blur the civil society that we enjoy. Do you agree with that?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What is so important to understand now is that currently I can call -- if there was an emergency involving nuclear weapons, I could call on the military for assistance. Congress has authorized that. The military is the only agency of government that really has the knowledge with respect to problems associated with a nuclear emergency. It similarly is the only agency of government with information concerning chemical and biological weapons.

MR. SESNO: But would you want military help in the Oklahoma bombing? There's a chemical component here.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Again, what is so important is what we have seen in terms of some of the chemical instruments that can be used, we do not have the expertise. Obviously the ATF and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have expertise with respect to standard explosives, with respect to other factors. It's just important that we have what the military has available. This nation's security should not be endangered because we cannot

use what is already existing expertise.

MR. SESNO: So what you're saying is you wish you were able to use the military to investigate the blast in Oklahoma City?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No, I didn't say that and you know I didn't say that.

MR. SESNO: Well, I'm trying to figure out what exactly in terms of chemical --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Okay, as I --

MR. SESNO: -- where the line is.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: As I indicated, the FBI and the ATF have -- they understand common explosives. But the military is the only agency that has information with respect to some of the sophisticated chemical instruments or agents that could be used in chemical warfare. All we are saying is that that information and the staffing of the Department of Defense that has information concerning such chemical agents ought to be available to prevent a national crisis.

MR. SESNO: What about another concern voiced by a number of groups that are looking to concerns for legal immigrants and aliens, that say that under some of the provisions of the president's proposal, secret information, secret courts, would be able to look over people who might have connections to international terrorist links or funding and they could be deported based on secret information?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What we have tried to do is fashion in the proposal to Congress clear language that passes constitutional muster that will balance the interests of national security with the appropriate rights that are afforded to all concerned in that situation.

MR. SESNO: The Oklahoma bombing occurred two years to the day after Waco. You were asked earlier today if you would welcome congressional hearings looking into the Waco incident, which you oversaw, which has gotten so much criticism from so many, directed in many cases at you personally. Would you welcome or call for hearings? Is that what is needed now?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think one of the things that is so important is that we understand there is no excuse for Oklahoma City whatsoever. Waco should be considered separately. And for those who have questions about Waco now, they should continue, if they want to, to ask them. But they've got to understand that there were congressional hearings; there were reports. We have had people review every step that was taken by the Department of Justice and the FBI. There has been a clear, close examination of it, and it is important for us to realize that we have got to take steps to hold people accountable for violence and that we have got to learn from everything we can what can be done to hold those people accountable without further violence.

MR. SESNO: Hearings?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: As I've said, I have -- as I told Congress, I'm delighted to come back, delighted to answer questions. I think it is very, very important that people be accountable for their actions. And from the

beginning, I've tried to say, "If you've got questions, we're going to try to answer them. We're going to try to review this." But one thing that is so important -- four ATF agents lay dead; 16 were wounded. The FBI came in. It did not attack. It tried everything it could, every way it could, to resolve the matter peacefully.

If other people have suggestions now as to how it can be done, those are issues that should be raised. But the FBI did not fire one single shot. It tried to negotiate. It tried to work out the matter peacefully over a 51-day period. It made a decision then that there were dangers involved in carrying it on further. They then tried to take steps to go in without violence, not firing one single shot. I think it's important for all of us in America to hold people accountable for violence, but to think about what we can do to resolve conflict peacefully. And that will require a national discussion.

MR. SESNO: Last week the Supreme Court, as you know, ruled that there was no -- it was unconstitutional for the federal government to require schools to have a 1,000-foot perimeter, a no-gun zone around schools. The president has asked you to try to get around that. Yet -- well, first of all, how would you do that? He suggested linking federal education money to them doing it themselves.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We're looking at it very carefully because what we've tried to do is to make sure that the federal government handles matters that were best handled by the federal government and that we work in partnership with state and local governments to support them in what are basically local efforts. I think we can fashion a statute that provides for the protection of our children in the school zones, that addresses the principles of federalism, and does so in a fair, thoughtful way.

MR. SESNO: My last question is this, a personal question in a way. You have said that those who are responsible for Oklahoma will be subject to the death penalty. But you yourself in the past, even though you're the chief law enforcement official in the land, have said that you personally are not in favor of the death penalty. Is this a crime, in your personal view, that is so clear-cut that it not only warrants the death penalty, but has caused you to change your own view about the death penalty in this country?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No. As I mentioned the day the president nominated me when I was asked about the death penalty, I personally oppose it. But as a prosecutor in Miami, I asked for it when the law and the evidence justified it. And I feel it does here.

MR. SESNO: Do you personally favor it in this case?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Again, I've stated my personal opinion and I have stated what we're going to try to do based on the evidence and the law.

MR. SESNO: Attorney General Janet Reno, thank you very much.

Well, just ahead on Late Edition, how far is the Congress really prepared to go to fight terrorism in the United States? We'll have Q&A with Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Arlen Specter right after this.

(Announcements.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: (From videotape.) The American people want us to stop terrorism. They want

us to put away anyone involved in it. We must not allow politics to drag us into endless quibbling over an important national item.

MR. SESNO: Well, joining us now from Philadelphia, Republican Senator Arlen Specter. He's chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. He's also a candidate for the Republican nomination for president. We will be taking phone calls from our viewers in just a bit, questions of yours for the senator.

Senator, thanks very much for joining us.

SEN. SPECTER: Nice being with you, Frank. Thank you.

MR. SESNO: You're going to be -- your committee, your intelligence committee, is going to be holding hearings into this Oklahoma business. Let me start by asking you about the Waco connection. The attorney general said she would be perfectly happy to go back to Capitol Hill to answer questions. Do you intend to ask questions about Waco in your hearings?

SEN. SPECTER: Frank, I have long felt that the Waco and the Idaho incidents have not really been examined as they should be, should have been, by the Congress. And I'm going to be discussing that with Vice Chairman Bob Kerrey on Intelligence and also ranking member Herb Kohl on the terrorism subcommittee of Judiciary, which I chair. I had discussed those matters informally last week with FBI Director Lou Freeh before we had the Judiciary Committee hearings last Thursday.

And I think that Attorney General Reno is emphatically right when she says that there is absolutely no excuse for the bombing in Oklahoma City, whatever happened anyplace else. You just can't justify it. But I do think that there needs to be a fuller explanation as to what happened in Waco and Idaho. And when she talks about accountability, that's accountability for everyone, starting with the top law enforcement official, the attorney general, on down.

MR. SESNO: While there is no excuse, as you say, or connection, or should be, between Waco and Oklahoma City, do you feel, by suggesting, as you do, that more questions need to be asked and answered, that some people, some people with extreme views, are driven to extreme actions because of what they saw as gross abuses in Waco?

SEN. SPECTER: Well, that's a subject which needs to be explored. They certainly say so. There are lots of angry voices, voices filled with hatred, voices going to violence, who talk, make excuses, rationalizations about Waco and Idaho. And I think it's very important to be as emphatic as we can that there's absolutely no justification for the Oklahoma City bombing, whatever else happened. You just can't be a vigilante, take the law into your own hands, and blow up innocent women, children and men.

MR. SESNO: Senator Specter, as you know, there's legislation pending to beef up the effort to combat terrorism here at home. It includes some things that are fairly non-controversial, such as a center, a command center for counterterrorism. It also includes these other things, such as allowing the military to cooperate in some regard in the investigation, and also these secret courts and secret evidence that would allow the deportation of some people from other countries. How do you feel about that?

SEN. SPECTER: Well, some of it is right, and I think some of it goes too far. I think --

MR. SESNO: What goes too far?

SEN. SPECTER: Well, first, what's right; I was about to say the counterterrorism center, Frank. What goes too far would be secret proceedings to deport somebody. That's not consistent with the Sixth Amendment right of confrontation. But I think we can solve the problem without violating the Constitution. Let me tell you specifically how. There are many people in the United States illegally, and we cannot deport them all; it's just too big a job. But we can pinpoint those who are terrorists or suspected of being terrorists and deport them not for being terrorists, which would require confrontation, but deport them for being illegally in the United States.

And what we need to do is to speed up the process; and also once we take them into custody, to have preventive detention, which is constitutional, for a brief period of time, and then to change the laws on how long these hearings will take and the appeal process so that we can deport people who are illegally in this country suspected of terrorism, completely consistent with the Constitution.

MR. SESNO: Senator Specter, what evidence have you seen or heard that indicates that progress, in fact, is being made to capture John Doe II?

SEN. SPECTER: I have seen the sketches. I have seen the issue of a warrant of arrest. That's going pretty far, Frank, when you have a warrant of arrest. Even though you don't have his name, you have to state facts on probable cause. From my conversations with FBI Director Lou Freeh telling me the kind of resources that are involved and the kind of intense investigation and the way they're combing the area, I have every confidence that they're doing everything possible. This is the greatest tragedy within the domestic confines of the United States, and I'm confident they're doing everything they can and that they are making progress.

MR. SESNO: Senator Specter, we're going to take a quick break.

When we come back, we'll have your calls for Senator Arlen Specter, right after this.

(Announcements.)

MR. SESNO: And welcome back to Late Edition. We're talking with Senator Arlen Specter, who's chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee. We want to go to the phones now and get some of your questions in for the senator; our first caller from Ellijay, Georgia. Hello. Go ahead, please.

CALLER: Senator Specter, great program. Joe McCutcheon (sp), Ellijay. My question is, can the American people, Senator Specter, really feel safe as they go about their daily chores and go to work? Can we really feel safe, Senator Specter?

SEN. SPECTER: Joe, I hate to tell you this, but terrorism is a big problem in this country and it has been for a long time. And long before the Oklahoma City incident, I had been saying so publicly. We had the Trade Center in New York City. There is a strong indication that the people who blew that up didn't have enough money to buy more explosives. It could have been worse. And I think terrorism is a big problem. And we had in the Capitol on a Monday night in 1983 the bomb exploding that ripped through the Senate Republican cloakroom.

Fortunately we were not in session; it was a Monday night. If we had been, we would have had a lot fewer senators. Terrorism is a big problem and we ought to focus on it. We've got to do a lot more about it and not wait for another incident to happen to give us another wakeup call.

MR. SESNO: Is your answer to the caller, then, that America is not a safe place?

SEN. SPECTER: I think there are major risks in America for terrorism. Is America a safe place? Probably the safest place in the world, but there are risks out there and there are risks out there from terrorism, and I think we ought to face it squarely.

MR. SESNO: Our next caller now is from Vienna, Virginia. Go ahead, please.

CALLER: Yes. I was born and raised in the South and I have listened to the Klan talk and I've listened to the militia talk, and there is no difference whatsoever in it. And I just want Senator Specter, instead of worrying about Waco, to condemn these militias. We don't need people with assault weapons running around like Boy Scouts.

MR. SESNO: Senator?

SEN. SPECTER: Well, I agree with that, and said so very emphatically last week. And I believe that the FBI can do more in terms of watching what operations like the Michigan Militia did. And we focused a hearing on Judiciary last Thursday afternoon just that.

MR. SESNO: Senator, let me ask you point-blank, then.

SEN. SPECTER: Yeah.

MR. SESNO: Should these militias have been infiltrated? Should they be infiltrated now?

SEN. SPECTER: Yes, and they can be, completely consistent with constitutional rights. The standards which require an indication of a crime are much higher than the Constitution requires. And I re-reviewed that in advance of the hearings. And there's nothing to stop the FBI from sending someone in. Look, the militia can take a person in if a person wants to join or not. It is not eavesdropping. There were a lot of excesses in the past, and that has led these attorney general's guidelines to be very, very restrictive, much more restrictive than the Constitution requires.

Now, in the hearings last Thursday we got into a discussion with the deputy attorney general, the FBI director and the deputy attorney general and said, "Well, you can have a preliminary inquiry which goes broader." And the FBI director said, "Well, if you had a broader interpretation, perhaps we could live with them." But I think we have to come to grips with that. And when that hearing ended, I issued a number of questions for the deputy attorney general and the FBI director as to specific language which the FBI director would like to have or the interpretation, and the Congress has the authority to establish those standards.

And I don't take second place to anybody on protecting constitutional rights, but also you can't have one hand tied behind the back of law enforcement. And a militia can be infiltrated. They're not a normal political

group. They're dealing with guns and firepower. And I think we need to ask questions, like what are their purposes? How many people do they have? What's their firepower? What connections do they have with militia in any other states? There are 26 states, perhaps even more. And those questions we have a right to ask and we ought to get answers.

MR. SESNO: Senator, very, very briefly, before we go, do you have any doubt in your mind that John Doe II is going to be caught, yes or no?

SEN. SPECTER: No, no. He's going to be caught.

MR. SESNO: Soon? Within days?

SEN. SPECTER: Well, I think it's going to be sooner rather than later. I think he's going to be caught and I think it's going to be sooner rather than later.

MR. SESNO: All right, Senator Arlen Specter, thanks very much for joining us today. We do appreciate it.

SEN. SPECTER: Nice to be with you.

MR. SESNO: We do appreciate your time.

Just ahead on Late Edition, the political aftermath of the Oklahoma tragedy. Could talk radio have contributed to a climate of hatred? We'll go 'round the table with our panel of veteran Washington journalists next.

(Announcements.)

MR. SESNO: Now we go 'round the table with our panel of veteran Washington journalists: Mara Liasson, White House correspondent for National Public Radio; Jack Nelson, Washington bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times; and Michael Barone, senior writer for U.S. News & World Report.

Welcome to all of you. This talk about Oklahoma City and what's happened has given rise to a lot of talk about the climate in America. The president contributed to that, as you all know, last week. Here's some of what he had to say.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: (From videotape.) We must stand up and speak against reckless speech that can push fragile people over the edge beyond the boundaries of civilized conduct to take this country into a dark place.

MR. SESNO: Jack Nelson, William Safire wrote that Clinton blew it by raising that topic. Do you agree with him?

MR. NELSON: I disagree with him. I mean, I think that the president of the United States has the responsibility to speak out when he sees something like this. And I think -- you know, I think the hate that goes on in this country over the radio, and in other forms, for that matter, is pretty irresponsible.

MS. LIASSON: You know, that clip that you just played is the second iteration of what President Clinton said. And his first iteration put the finger on what was going on over the airwaves. And because he has a thing about radio talk show hosts, who, of course, are his sworn enemies, many of them, I think that part was a mistake, to actually talk about -- to suggest that talk radio was responsible. But I think when he finally reined himself in and got it on to a broader plane, I think he started a debate that's important to have.

MR. BARONE: Well, I think there was some conflation here in the president's speech between putting together speech and action sort of in the same phrase as if anybody -- you know, the danger is you're confusing -- there's a few people on talk radio who have said some terrible things. Gordon Liddy says, you know, "Shoot the ATF in self-defense." In my book that goes over the line. The vast majority of this stuff is robust political debate, which is what a free democracy is all about. People are not polite in that debate all the time. And I think that, you know, we're not under an obligation to like the president.

MR. NELSON: Well, I don't think that's exactly what you'd call robust political debate, certainly the G. Gordon Liddy thing. And incidentally --

MR. BARONE: No, that I agree with, Jack.

MR. NELSON: And incidentally, on this Tuesday night the Senate Republican Campaign Committee is having a dinner where it's honoring talk radio, including G. Gordon Liddy, who is one of the keynote speakers.

MR. SESNO: Do you think they should throw him out?

MR. NELSON: Well, I don't know about that. But, I mean, to honor someone who's a convicted felon, who spews this kind of hate on the radio? I think it raises certain questions.

MS. LIASSON: Yeah. You know, talk radio as an institution is not responsible for this, and I think Michael's right, that there is a lot of robust debate. However, there are a lot of remarks that do go over the line, and I think people have to be responsible for them voluntarily. Suggesting that Sarah Brady should be put down in the veterinarian's office --

MR. NELSON: And her husband.

MS. LIASSON: -- is over the line. And her husband.

MR. BARONE: Well, yeah, I think those things are all bad. But, you know, we have to make a disconnect -- we have to make a disconnect --

MS. LIASSON: And they should be --

MR. BARONE: -- between robust political debate, on the one hand, and what some nuts do and so forth. I mean, back in the days of the Vietnam War, George McGovern did not blow up the lab at the University of Wisconsin. Newt Gingrich or Rush Limbaugh did not blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City. And the things that they said, I think, cannot be said to have led to this or anything of the sort.

MS. LIASSON: Right, nor is anybody saying that. But I think what is important is that people have to have some kind of standards and values and voluntary restraints on themselves. I think that speech should be protected, and I don't think Gordon Liddy should be cut off the air either. But I do think that people should know that their words have consequences.

MR. SESNO: Jack, this past week the National Rifle Association got caught up in this as a result of the full-page ad they ran earlier this year and the fund-raising letter from Wayne La Pierre in which he referred to ATF agents as thugs and referred to their Nazi bucket helmets and that sort of thing. He acknowledges the rhetoric was overblown, but he says there are dozens, perhaps more, examples of gross overreaching by federal law enforcement authorities. Isn't it true that if it were a group on the left screaming police abuse, people would be listening a lot more sympathetically?

MR. NELSON: Well, there's no question about that. Not only that; I mean, can you imagine if these were Black Panthers, for example, who were out there as militia, rather than these so-called angry white men, what the uproar would be? Of course. You know, there's no question about that.

MR. BARONE: Well, we had experience with that 25 years ago.

MR. NELSON: But you know what I have really been struck by, and that is that so many of our leaders, senators -- and I'm talking about some of the Democrats as well as the Republicans, and particularly on the talk shows today -- saying that this is just a tiny fringe out there on the element. You could have said that about the Klan, too, when the Klan was committing all the murders in the South. And nobody knows exactly how many people are in these militias. We know that they're in most of the states. And nobody has done a real investigation, so we don't know whether it's a tiny fringe. But how small it is is really not key anyway.

MR. BARONE: Well, we don't know --

MR. NELSON: It's what they're capable of doing, as they did in Oklahoma City.

MR. BARONE: Yeah, we don't know if the militia are law-breakers or if they're just people with views that seem, at least to me, to be pretty nutty. I mean, if they're just people with views that are nutty, you know, that's just another citizen.

MR. SESNO: You know --

MR. BARONE: We simply --

MR. NELSON: I think we've seen --

MR. BARONE: Well, but, I mean, are they going to use it in a criminal way? I mean, was McVeigh just a lonely person with a couple of other confederates, or is he part of a very large movement? I suspect it's the former, but I think Jack's right. We don't know for sure, and that's something law enforcement should be trying to find out.

MR. NELSON: I thought it was very interesting. Your previous guest, Senator Specter, said, "Yes,

terrorism is very important in this country and we need to look into it, and we need to infiltrate these militias." They had no reluctance finally to infiltrate the Klan, and that's what killed the Klan, the fact of news exposure, massive press attention, which hasn't been given to this militia. The militia has been growing like this across the country with hardly any attention given to it.

MS. LIASSON: Well, they're getting a lot now, that's for sure. You can't open up the paper without reading about the bomb-making manuals and the instructions on how to conduct terrorism.

MR. SESNO: And where will you draw the line? We'll ask that question when we talk about infiltrating groups that may have extreme views. One more trip around the table when we come back.

(Announcements.)

MR. SESNO: Time for one more trip around the table. Jack, you were talking before about infiltrating the militias. But where would you draw the line? Who would make the decision, some nameless judge someplace?

MR. NELSON: Well, I suppose it would wind up in the courts eventually. But the attorney general has to make the decision as to, you know, what kind of -- how they will follow the guidelines, and the FBI director.

MR. SESNO: That's been done before and there were abuses.

MR. NELSON: Well, they were in the South; there's no question about it. But they have tighter guidelines now. What they have to do is look at the guidelines and see if they have to loosen them a little bit, although I heard Senator Specter say that under the guidelines you now have, you could infiltrate the militia.

MS. LIASSON: Right. And they haven't been asking to review them. They're just talking about applying them internally in a slightly different way. We don't know exactly what that might lead to.

MR. SESNO: Michael Barone, what will come, do you suppose, of all this discussion about tougher terrorism measures in this country?

MR. BARONE: Well, I think we probably will get some change in the law or in the way the law is applied, and we will get more of this infiltration. And I think it's justified. I mean, you have people out there that we have some reasonable basis to believe may be planning violent activity against innocent individuals. We ought to try and prevent that any way we can. The access these people have to explosives now is much greater than it was in the past, and so we have to do this. Now, you know, that can be challenged in court eventually if you prosecute such people. Did you interfere with their Fourth Amendment rights? I think that, you know, having these people -- Jack covered the infiltration of the Ku Klux Klan in the South. As I understand it, the agents would join up saying they were interested and they would get information.

MR. NELSON: Well, they would pay people to join up. You know, an interesting thing, I think, too, about the militia is that in some of these places they have a lot of public support. Now, I had an official of the Agriculture Department tell me the other day they wanted to prosecute somebody in Montana and the U.S. attorney sent them back a message and said, "Well, this is a kind of close case anyway, so we don't want to prosecute because there's so much public support out here for the militia." I mean, you know --

MR. BARONE: Well, some of the things they may be doing are just stuff that strikes us in Washington as weird, but it's just the exercise of free discussion and a different point of view.

MR. NELSON: Well, that's right.

MS. LIASSON: Well, and in some cases they're stopping Fish & Wildlife people from doing their jobs and other law enforcement officials. I mean, there's a lot of tension out there.

MR. SESNO: How does the White House view this whole question now of the anger out there and the hostility?

MS. LIASSON: I think the White House is viewing it as an opportunity for the president to, A, start the debate that he's wanted to. Perhaps some of them are thinking about scoring some political points. But I also think that now, especially after the president really did make a misstep the first time out on this, they're viewing it very, very carefully.

MR. SESNO: Michael Barone, Mara Liasson and Jack Nelson, thanks again to all of you; appreciate your time.

Bruce Morton and the last word still ahead here on Late Edition.

(Announcements.)

FBI DIRECTOR LOUIS FREEH: (From videotape.) Intelligence, when used carefully and constitutionally, helps to protect the American people. It should not be considered a dirty word.

MR. SESNO: Just ahead, Bruce Morton and the last word on the vast power of the federal government and using that power carefully.

(Announcements.)

MR. SESNO: It's time now for Bruce Morton and the last word. On this 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, Bruce joins us from an appropriate and once-turbulent place, the campus of Kent State University.

Bruce?

MR. MORTON: Frank, on this campus a quarter of a century ago this coming week, National Guardsmen opened fire on students, killing four and wounding nine. Some of the students were protesting the Vietnam War. Others were simply on their way to class. One was a member of the ROTC.

That was the government dealing with dissent in a way most Americans thought was wrong, excessive. Still, there was violence on both sides during the Vietnam protests. Some students blew up buildings and so on. Now, after the violence in Oklahoma City, we are starting to debate again. What should the government do? What is appropriate, and what not? J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, most would say now, went too far, infiltrating groups which disagreed with U.S. policy but were peaceful, or sending so many agents to Communist Party affairs that they

outnumbered the party members. On the other hand, a government informant apparently was a key factor in the quick arrests of the World Trade Center bombers. Most people would approve of that.

The rules about infiltration were tightened after Hoover. Should they be loosened again? In the 1970s, when skyjackings were common, airlines began searching passengers and baggage. "Unconstitutional," some critics said, but most travelers willingly paid the price. The question is, what price might we pay this time? Ease the rules so it's easier for police to search your house, your office? Courts have already relaxed the rules in that area. Gun groups, like the National Rifle Association, say the government wants to take our guns, though there is no sign of that so far.

What about free speech? When the NRA denounces jack-booted, Nazi-like government agents, is it, in effect, telling citizens to buy guns to shoot at the feds? President Clinton's suggestion, when you hear people talking hate and violence: Talk back; be as loud as they are.

This debate will go on for a time; how much liberty to trade for how much security. It's a hard question.

MR. SESNO: And a question that's going to be in full debate here in Washington, Bruce. The question is, is this balancing act one that we saw very much out of kilter there at Kent State?

MR. MORTON: Well, I think over the years we've gone back and forth. Kent State was clearly excessive violence. As I said, most people nowadays would say J. Edgar Hoover had way too much power. But it's an argument that I suppose is appropriate in a democracy. We have to keep free speech. We don't want to condone violence. And finding that middle area has never been easy.

MR. SESNO: How do people at Kent State feel about all of this, having seen it up so close, not so many years ago?

MR. MORTON: Well, there are people here, of course, who were here then. There are other people whose parents were here then. There are teachers who were here then. What you hear mostly is that student activism still exists, but it's more local, it's more focused and it's less violent.

MR. SESNO: Do you really think people want to see infiltration of groups in this country based on their ideology or even their extremist views?

MR. MORTON: No, I suspect that most people don't want to see that. I think probably most people would say we are for infiltration of a group that is known to preach violence, and that's about the only kind of group.

MR. SESNO: A very careful call, or delicate call and careful balance. Bruce Morton, thanks very much.

Time now to check in with Jeanne Meserve for a look at what's next on The World Today. Jeanne?

MS. MESERVE: Thank you, Frank. President Clinton is about to announce new sanctions against Iran, including a trade and investment embargo. And 20 years after the last chopper lifted off the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon, we'll look at celebrations in Vietnam and soul-searching in the U.S. Those stories and more