

ORIGINAL

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ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO PRESS CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1995

12:33 p.m.

The Henry P. Gonzalez Convention Center

200 East Market Street

San Antonio, Texas

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1 MS. RENO: Thank you so much,
2 Sheriff. It is a great honor for me to be here
3 again with you this evening as you start your annual
4 conference. As many of you know, my first job was
5 in the Sheriffs' office. I worked two summers for
6 the Dade County Sheriff, and I have now had a chance
7 to meet sheriffs from across this land. You have
8 got one of the toughest jobs in law enforcement.
9 You have got to be the law enforcement official, but
10 then you have got to figure out where to put them.
11 It's one thing for a police chief to develop arrest
12 policies, but he doesn't have to worry about where
13 to put them. He doesn't have to worry about how the
14 warrants get served; how the courtrooms get
15 protected, and he or she doesn't have to run for
16 office. What you do day in and day out for this
17 nation is incredible. You're on the front lines in
18 terms of modern policing, in terms of what's best in
19 corrections, in terms, day after day, of what we can
20 do to prevent our young people from getting into
21 trouble in the first place. And on behalf of all of
22 the Americans whom you serve, I say thank you from
23 the bottom of my heart.

24 One of the first people I met when I came
25 to Washington on a cold February day was Bud Meeks.

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1 He does one great job for you. He is always there.
2 I can count on Bud to know what he is talking about,
3 to be prepared, to be informed and to be absolutely
4 tenacious in his advocacy for sheriffs. During the
5 past few months, he has been a leader in our Asset
6 Forfeiture Working Group that the Department
7 organized. The Deputy Attorney General was telling
8 me just the other day that Bud has been instrumental
9 in bringing everyone together.

10 We are committed to working with you to
11 ensure that asset forfeiture continues to be the
12 critical tool that law enforcement knows it is and
13 that it will be available to us. I congratulate
14 you, Sheriff Murphy, as you prepare to enter a term,
15 and I greet Sheriff Pierpont as he begins his term
16 as president later this week. And I look forward to
17 working with you in every way I can because there
18 are a lot of challenges still left, and I know we
19 will have a great working relationship.

20 I don't like public officials that show up
21 and then never get heard from again and don't
22 respond. That's the reason I've tried to keep in
23 touch with you; not just through Bud, but by coming
24 here, meeting in Salt Lake City, then Pittsburg and
25 now here in San Antonio. I've enjoyed talking with

1 you, hearing your concerns as I go to your
2 conference or as I travel through this country and
3 meet you in your home communities and home counties,
4 and then returning to Washington and trying to
5 address the problems that you call to my attention.
6 Washington won't know all the needs and resources of
7 each county, of each sheriffs' office. It has been
8 invaluable for me to have the chance to talk with
9 you, to hear from you, and to try to find solutions
10 for the problems that you face that Washington can
11 help address.

12 Our dialogue supports the consistent goal
13 of this administration; a goal that provides for a
14 partnership between the federal government and state
15 and local law enforcement. Our partnership starts
16 with an understanding of the vital role that
17 sheriffs play, and it's based on how can we assist;
18 not how do we take over, but how can we assist in
19 making sure that intelligence is shared; that we
20 give you all the information that we may have that
21 will be invaluable to you in the solution of a
22 crime.

23 What has made me so happy is that some
24 sheriffs have taken me up on my request to call or
25 write if you've got a problem. I'll get a complaint

1 from the sheriff and he'll say, "This U.S. Attorney
2 didn't let me know what they were going to do." And
3 we follow up and find that we made a mistake and we
4 take steps to correct it. Or they will have a
5 suggestion as to what we can do to be of assistance.
6 I, again, urge you, if you can't get a problem
7 resolved, pick up the phone or write. We try to
8 follow through in every way that we can.

9 We don't serve you well at all if we rush
10 to federalize crimes that have been historically and
11 traditionally prosecuted on the local level. I was
12 a local prosecutor, and I didn't like the feds
13 taking over my cases when I knew I could do just as
14 well as they could. But at the same time there were
15 cases that the Feds could handle a lot better than
16 we could, and we made a joint decision to have those
17 cases prosecuted in federal court. That's the type
18 of partnership we want to have with you. What is in
19 the best interest of the case, after full
20 consultation with you, is the standard we want to
21 use in determining how we work together with all.

22 We also wouldn't serve you very well if we
23 just focused on the big cities of this nation. It
24 is fascinating to see what has happened across this
25 country. Violence is coming down in most of the

1 major cities, but in instances after instance. It
2 has spilled out into suburban areas and into more
3 rural areas. Sheriffs are telling me about gangs
4 and crimes and types of crimes that they have not
5 seen before, and we need to recognize that we have
6 got to serve all America -- the rural county, the
7 major city -- we have got to serve the people of
8 this nation.

9 Now, to give you an example of how I've
10 got to learn some more before I leave here tomorrow
11 morning, I've been following after police told me
12 about the problems with the FCC Spectrum and what we
13 need to do to ensure appropriate radio
14 communication. I've been following it. I wanted to
15 make sure that the sheriffs were on board, but I
16 heard as I came in here tonight that there may be
17 sheriffs with concerns, rural sheriffs perhaps. We
18 want to hear from everybody, and we want to try to
19 do our level best to address your concerns no matter
20 where you are from or whom you represent. We want
21 to do it in a bipartisan way because politics in the
22 bottom line doesn't belong in law enforcement.
23 We're here to serve people in a constructive way.

24 My concern for the more rural areas has
25 been one of the reasons why I wanted to make sure,

1 after I heard from sheriffs who told me as we were
2 talking about the crime bill early on, "Well, it
3 won't help me. I've never gotten any help from
4 Washington. My county is so small and all I'd want
5 would be one deputy, and nobody is going to listen
6 to me." That's one of the reasons we directed so
7 many of the cops' grants to smaller communities. A
8 few deputies, one deputy can make a big difference
9 in a small town, and we will continue to ensure that
10 rural interests are not forgotten when national
11 policy is made in Washington.

12 But our partnership continues with an
13 understanding that you want and need less
14 bureaucracy when you apply for help in Washington.
15 I used to figure out that it took \$6 from my
16 tax-paying pocket to go to Washington for an LEAA
17 Grant, process the grant in Washington, come back to
18 Atlanta, then to Tallahassee and back to Miami, and
19 I might get \$3 back after the \$6 I sent. We want to
20 do everything we can to streamline the process. I'm
21 real proud of the job we've done on that score.
22 We've dramatically cut red tape for the cops'
23 applications. The cops' fast application was one
24 page and notification of awards was prompt. Best of
25 all, the administrative costs of the program are

1 less than 1 percent of the funds, a truly
2 outstanding figure. And I give the credit to people
3 like you across this country who told us what needed
4 to be done but were not satisfied. We want you to
5 continue to let us know when we can improve, how we
6 can improve processes and how we can be more
7 responsive.

8 We made a major step forward last year in
9 the passage of the Crime Act. It offered a targeted
10 tough approach to fighting crime in our communities.
11 The National Sheriffs' Association was there every
12 step of the way. Together we won top enforcement,
13 more policing, more prisons to house criminals, and
14 smart directed prevention funds that were based on
15 what police officers told us was working.

16 The crime bill outlawed dangerous assault
17 weapons and provided monies to continue to implement
18 the Brady Bill, which prevented 41,000 guns from
19 reaching the hands of felons in the first year
20 alone. We can't turn back on any of these programs
21 and let it dissolve in partisan bickering. We've
22 all got to work together, Republicans and Democrats,
23 to address the issue of crime in this country in a
24 common sense, no nonsense, thoughtful, constructive
25 way.

1 At every step along the way, from
2 drafting, to passage, to implementation, in no small
3 part due to your hard work, a strong effective crime
4 law is in place. We will make the president's
5 historic pledge to put 100,000 new police officers
6 on the streets of America and we will do it in
7 record time. Awards for over 17,000 police officers
8 have already been made under the cops' program.
9 From the nation's smallest towns to its largest
10 cities, we have placed more deputies and cops on the
11 streets practicing community policing. Almost 2,500
12 of these new officers are sheriffs' deputies from
13 over 1,300 sheriffs' offices across the United
14 States.

15 In addition, we will continue to fight for
16 full funding of the Burn Grant Program to help,
17 among other things, to fund federal, state and local
18 task forces. It was so important for me to hear
19 from sheriffs from various parts of this country
20 talk about the Burn Grant and to be able to take
21 that message back to the administration and make
22 sure that the funding was there.

23 The second major issue which the crime
24 bill addressed was our need to build prisons.
25 Perhaps more than any other group of law enforcement

1 officers, you understand the importance of
2 correctional facilities because you are responsible
3 for administering correctional facilities in the
4 county. But you know it better, and I know why.
5 When a state prison system gets overcrowded,
6 somebody will put a cap on it, but they don't pay
7 too much attention to the local jail. And so the
8 people start coming into the local jail and the
9 judge says, "The state prison system is overcrowded,
10 so I'm going to put that person into jail. They'll
11 serve a longer period of time."

12 I understand the pressures that have been
13 placed on sheriffs as we deal with the problem of
14 how we incarcerate and ensure truth in sentencing to
15 dangerous offenders. That is one of the reasons
16 that the crime law we passed last year devoted \$8
17 billion over five years to build prisons. We need
18 cells to house violent criminals, and we must ensure
19 that violent criminals serve the time they were
20 sentenced to.

21 We included important provisions in the
22 '94 crime law requiring states to include plans for
23 disbursement of funds. The administration wants to
24 make sure that states get the dollars to localities
25 who desperately need these facilities, and we want

1 to do everything we can to streamline the process so
2 that money is not lost along the way in
3 administrative overhead.

4 Unfortunately, some in congress want to
5 change the 1994 Crime Acts Prison Proposal. Because
6 of the greater flexibility under the 1994 law, there
7 is no doubt in my mind that states and localities
8 will be able to build correctional facilities more
9 quickly, more fairly and with greater fiscal
10 responsibility than under either the House or Senate
11 proposal. We need to stand firm and make sure that
12 we get dollars to states and to local governments in
13 ways that can count to ensure that dangerous
14 offenders are properly retained.

15 Another pressing problem concerns the
16 incarceration of undocumented criminal aliens.
17 Current law allows the federal government to
18 reimburse states and localities for the cost
19 associated with the incarceration of such criminals.
20 This year \$130 million is allocated to the State
21 Criminal Alien Assistance Program. This year all of
22 the money was directed in the Appropriations Bill to
23 the state level. Sheriffs immediately started
24 talking to me about it, and I went back to
25 Washington, tried to get the best lawyers in the

1 department to look at the issue to see if there was
2 some way we could provide flexibility. But we were
3 told that the Appropriations Bill controlled. But
4 because of the crime law passed in 1994, localities
5 as well as states will be able to receive
6 reimbursements next year.

7 We want to work with you to ensure that
8 these monies will meet the needs of localities as we
9 move forward with implementation. Because of your
10 special expertise on enforcement and incarceration
11 issues, I invite your input as we proceed. And in
12 this connection, we are working with sheriffs now to
13 try to design programs that provide a partnership
14 between the Immigration and Naturalization Service
15 and the local jail to quickly identify criminal
16 aliens in the jail who should be deported and to
17 work with you to ensure that it is done as promptly
18 as possible. This is a difficult task because for
19 so long the INS was neglected. It did not have the
20 infrastructure or the staffing to begin to do the
21 job that is being demanded of it in these days. We
22 are continuing to build that agency, to give it the
23 strength to do the job and to work with you as a
24 true partner.

25 In connection with jails, I'm also pleased

1 to announce that in a few weeks we will award the
2 National Sheriffs' Association a grant to establish
3 an interjail and prison's T.V. network. Working
4 cooperatively with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and
5 the American Correctional Association, NSA will
6 design pilot programming to educate and provide
7 rehabilitation for prisoners. Options for
8 programming include drug and alcohol rehabilitation,
9 vocational and employment readiness training and
10 domestic violence reduction training. Television
11 can be a force for good. This innovative grant will
12 help us consider how to use it better to help
13 inmates come back to the community with a chance of
14 success. The person who was instrumental in
15 spearheading this effort again was Bud Meeks. We
16 welcome the leadership of America's sheriffs and the
17 National Sheriffs' Association in this effort and we
18 thank you.

19 And while we're talking about the
20 innovation of sheriffs and what you were doing in
21 leading law enforcement efforts, I've been so
22 pleased in my visits around the country to see the
23 work that NSA is doing with regards to the Triad
24 Project. Your partnership with the IACP and AARP,
25 will develop workable strategies to attack crime,

1 violence and focus on the quality of life for
2 seniors relative to law enforcement in community
3 service. It's this type of bold innovation that is
4 going to make the difference in law enforcement, and
5 again you've helped lead the way.

6 But as we consider these issues, I will
7 always remember when I first met with you in Salt
8 Lake City and started talking about the young people
9 of America. Some people had criticized me saying I
10 sound a little bit like a social worker. But the
11 response I got from the sheriffs at Salt Lake City
12 when I started talking about children and what we
13 needed to do convinced me that sheriffs who were on
14 the front line who watch the kids come back and
15 watch the kids grow up know better than anyone else.
16 But the problem is of graver dimension now.

17 We have just seen the latest figures that
18 show that violence is down generally in the country,
19 but youth violence is up in startling proportions.
20 For a long while, juvenile arrest rates for violent
21 crime remained relatively constant. But recently
22 while the juvenile population has actually decreased
23 over the last several years, the arrest rates have
24 shot up, growing nearly 40 percent since 1988. On
25 average, the number of juveniles arrested for murder

1 is double the average for young adults.
2 Demographics predict that today's boom in youth
3 homicides could be tomorrow's explosion as it is
4 predicted that the number of juveniles in this
5 country will increase over the next 15 years. But
6 as sadly, young people are the most victimized group
7 in this country. In other words, kids are killing
8 kids and, ladies and gentlemen, this must stop.

9 All of us must commit to doing everything
10 we can to stop the violence. Sometimes that means
11 simply providing activities to young people in the
12 afternoons. I've seen deputy sheriffs and police
13 officers finish a shift at 3:00 and then be out on
14 the soccer field with a kid. I've seen them taking
15 weekends to participate in programs for youngsters.
16 We can do so much more. Sometimes it means an adult
17 to listen and participate in their lives. I know
18 because I've seen many of you in your schools; your
19 deputies in the schools talking with kids, being
20 mentors, being models, being examples. But we can
21 do more.

22 So many of you have come to me about
23 problems you face, like the growing prominence of
24 gangs in areas where we hadn't seen gangs before.
25 Recently, I talked to the Attorney General of

1 Wisconsin and he described how gangs were spilling
2 over from the Chicago area into Madison and into
3 Milwaukee where they had not been seen as much.
4 This echoes what I'm hearing from law enforcement
5 across the country. Gangs are not just an urban
6 problem. The gang leaders, usually young adults,
7 lure youngsters in on the false hope of family, of
8 friendship -- something that too many young people
9 lack at home. And once lured, juveniles often
10 become the drug runners, the gun-toters, the violent
11 enforcers. Clearly, the adults who bring children
12 into crime must face tough, swift, vigorous
13 punishment. I want the Department of Justice to be
14 helping sheriffs to identify gangs and to trade
15 information so that we make sure that these people
16 are brought to justice. It becomes difficult for
17 you if a gang comes in from one state into your
18 county. You may have the person on just an auto
19 theft, but we may be able to prove, if we worked
20 together and exchange information, that this person
21 has organized a youth gang that was responsible for
22 robberies and perhaps even homicides in the state
23 from whence they came. And if we take the case and
24 make it a federal case, we will be able to bring all
25 the charges together and to make sure that justice

1 is done. But we don't want that done without your
2 approval. We want to work together in looking at
3 these cases and figuring out what can be done in the
4 best interest of the case. And most of all, I want
5 to make sure that we exchange information with the
6 sheriffs. That is key to everything we do.

7 A little over a year ago, I began the
8 Anti-Violence Initiative. I asked U.S. attorneys to
9 get together with their federal, state and local law
10 enforcement officials to figure out how to identify
11 violent criminals and to work together to make sure
12 they're taken off the streets. It might mean the
13 Federal RICO Statute could be the right weapon or it
14 could be as simple as helping local officials to
15 identify and investigate gang activity. I know that
16 in Fort Dodge, Iowa, a community of 29,000, a
17 violent drug trafficking gang was terrorizing the
18 town. Federal, state and local law enforcement
19 worked together to arrest 43 members of the gang.
20 Following the arrests in 1994, for the first time in
21 many years, there were no recorded murders. That's
22 the kind of positive results a solid partnership can
23 bring about, and that is an example of what is being
24 done across the nation.

25 The FBI has created safe streets task

1 forces to attack street gang and drug related
2 violence. 719 FBI special agents have teamed up
3 with 916 state and local officers and 150 federal
4 law enforcement officers. It's making a difference.
5 But let Lewis Freeh and I know if there is something
6 that we can do to improve on that. We don't want to
7 be satisfied as long as we watch our children being
8 killed and killing in the fashion that is happening
9 today. The FBI has also held conferences on gang
10 activities, as has the ATF. In March of 1995, state
11 and local task force officers, FBI personnel and
12 others attended a conference in Quantico on the
13 Latin Kings. The trends of the gang are nationwide,
14 but the patterns of criminal activity may be and how
15 to increase intelligence gathering and reporting.
16 We need to find better ways to share information.
17 We should be able to let state prosecutors know that
18 the young, habitual offender they have arrested in
19 one state last Tuesday left a swath of crime two
20 states wide in the last three months. We want to
21 work together to improve and modernize our criminal
22 recordkeeping systems. We need to explore how to
23 achieve this common-sense approach to youth
24 violence.

25 We have to use the tools available to us.

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1 In the crime act we passed a Youth Handgun Safety
2 Act, which in most instances makes it illegal for a
3 juvenile to carry a handgun. This law is not meant
4 to replace the state law enforcement officials from
5 dealing with the problem with weapons position.
6 Nine times out of ten, it should be a state matter.
7 But when you need it you should be able to reach out
8 to the U.S. Attorney for help, and I urge you to do
9 so.

10 This is not about the right of young
11 people who learn the enjoyment of lawful hunting and
12 sporting. When gun homicides by juveniles have
13 nearly tripled since 1983, we need to work together
14 on the problem kids and handguns. But that won't do
15 it, just finding the bad guys and detaining them,
16 and making sure they're punished. You know better
17 than anybody because you watch the kids grow up.
18 You watch them and about the third grade, eight or
19 nine years old, start to get in trouble. You see
20 them truant on the streets during the day. You
21 understand where they're headed because you know the
22 home they come from.

23 Let us join forces to make sure that
24 America makes its investment in its children in
25 terms of afternoon and evening programs, mentoring

1 programs, conflict/resolution programs,
2 school-to-work programs. It can make a difference.
3 Let us join together to end the violence in the home
4 that oftentimes spawns the violence on the streets.
5 You are doing it day in and day out.

6 This is a difficult time in America, but
7 in those days following April the 19th, I have never
8 been so proud of America as it joined together to
9 support law enforcement in tracking down the people
10 responsible for that violence, in holding victims
11 and their survivors and helping them begin to heal.

12 It was a remarkable experience to talk to
13 fire fighters and doctors in Indianapolis who had
14 gone to Oklahoma City to help. It was a moving
15 experience to talk to a police lieutenant in
16 Oklahoma City and to understand what he had been
17 through in those last days. One of the things he
18 asked me to do, he said, "Too often you all forget
19 the spouses, the people who wait at home. Would you
20 mind calling my wife and talking to her?" And it
21 was a wonderful experience to be able to talk to the
22 lieutenant's wife and to tell her how much we owe to
23 so many who stand and support law enforcement every
24 step of the way.

25 We have much to do, but working together

1 using common sense, being unafraid, let us move
2 forward to defend and protect the communities and
3 the nation we love.

4 (SPEECH CONCLUDED)
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