



Department of Justice

STATEMENT

OF

JANET RENO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE

THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE

CONCERNING

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

PRESENTED ON

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the progress the Department of Justice has made in carrying out its many important and varied responsibilities over the past year.

I am proud that the Department has a strong record of accomplishment in meeting the challenges it has faced in the past year, and I am confident, that with your help, we can assure that this record of success in law enforcement and program implementation not only continues but improves.

I know that only with a genuinely bipartisan effort at all levels of government can we effectively address the many difficult issues facing the Nation today. And although we will disagree at times, I pledge to everyone a continued effort to talk with you, Mr. Chairman, and to work with this Committee and with other Members of Congress, so that together we can truly serve the best interests of the public.

As you know, Mr Chairman, just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of travelling to your home state to attend a tribal justice conference in Salt Lake City. I was deeply impressed with your participation and concern for the issues at hand. Fundamentally, it is our ability to listen and to respect one another's point of view that will lead to success. It has worked before; it was so evident in the good spirit we both felt in Salt Lake City; and I know that we will continue down this path. For in the end, we all need to work together in a bipartisan effort to focus on the challenges before us.

Let me briefly address what we have been doing at the Department of Justice to meet these challenges.

Nothing in the Department's purview is more important than fighting our Nation's crime and violence problem. As I have told this Committee before, effective law enforcement responses to violent crime and drug trafficking demand constant coordination and interagency collaboration. At the Federal level, as I testified last year, we are working successfully to end the turf wars that have plagued law enforcement for too many years.

The Department is also moving in the right direction to better assist state and local law enforcement in the fight against crime and violence in our communities. The strength of

this growing partnership, I believe, may be best exhibited in the results we are beginning to see from our Anti-Violent Crime Initiative, begun just over one year ago and in operation in all 94 districts.

Through the Anti-Violent Crime Initiative, we work in genuine partnership with state and local law enforcement, implementing strategies developed at the local level to target the worst offenders and effectively address the particular area's violent crime problems -- including gun crime, rural crime, and violent drug gang activity.

In just this first year, we have seen greatly encouraging results such as the dismantling of a violent drug gang in Louisiana. Eight gang members were tried in Federal court and another 35 defendants pleaded guilty in State court to drug charges. The neighborhood which had been terrorized by this gang experienced a 34% decrease in violent crime. I have attached to my testimony a copy of our report on this initiative.

As you know, since the Department's last Oversight Hearing before this Committee, the bipartisan Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 was enacted. This historic piece of legislation -- strongly supported by every major law enforcement organization -- enacted critical elements of President Clinton's legislative anti-crime program, including Federal assistance of

unprecedented scope to expand community policing, increase prison space for violent offenders, support drug courts, end violence against women, and help stop crime before it starts.

The Department has been actively and effectively implementing this Act in a non-bureaucratic, non-partisan fashion. We have tailored much of our implementation towards the needs of State and local law enforcement.

The cornerstone of the 1994 Act is the President's community policing initiative that will put 100,000 new police officers on the streets to work directly with community members to reduce and prevent violence.

By cutting through the red tape and simplifying the process, we already have been able to send notices of awards to more than 6,500 communities to help them hire nearly 17,000 new police officers. For example, our COPS application forms for small cities and towns were only one page long, so that local sheriffs and police chiefs would be encouraged to apply. In the coming year, we will continue our implementation effort and plan to fund 21,000 additional officers, bringing the total for two years to approximately 41,000 new officers hired under the Crime Act.

The Department is committed to being a full partner with state and local governments in the fight to curb violence against

women. Through the Law Enforcement and Prosecution grants of the Violence Against Women Act, we already awarded over \$426,000 to almost every State and territory.

An integral part of last year's Crime Law is the state prison grant program. By this year's June 1 deadline, 89 applications had been received from 38 states for bootcamp grants under this program. Future funds will be available to assist States in expanding correctional facility capacity to ensure adequate space for confinement of violent offenders.

The '94 Act also includes many important reforms in Federal criminal law, including creation of an effective death penalty for the most heinous crimes; a "three-strikes-and-you're-out" law to incapacitate permanently the most incorrigible serious violent offenders; a ban on assault weapons; and other measures to combat firearms violence, violence against women, and terrorism. We are vigorously enforcing and otherwise implementing these measures throughout the country.

We are also working hard to implement the Department's Drug Court Grant program which will hold offenders accountable and expand the availability of this critical link between criminal justice system and effective treatment which has already proven successful in combatting drug crime.

Crime prevention is a necessary component of a balanced, comprehensive approach to fighting violent crime in America. The Crime Law's crime prevention programs are strongly supported by police, prosecutors and members of both parties who realize that more prisons alone are not the answer to the crime problem facing this country.

Combatting the threat of terrorism on American soil or against Americans abroad is a high priority of the Department. Not only have international terrorist activities claimed an increasing number of American lives over the past decade, including those lost in the World Trade Center bombing and the murders outside CIA headquarters, but we must also face the growing prospect of domestic terrorism.

The terrorism in Oklahoma challenged all of us to prove that we have the will and the power to fulfill a fundamental responsibility set out for us in the first sentence of our Constitution: to "insure domestic tranquility."

The tragic events of April 19 should remind us that we must never forget that terrorism can strike anywhere and at any time. At the same time, we must do all in our power to prevent such an event from happening again. Unfortunately, in our open society, terrorism is always a possibility. However, there are steps that can be taken, and must be taken, to provide the Department with

the personnel, infrastructure, and equipment needed to detect future terrorist events when they are in the planning stage, or to aggressively investigate and prosecute them if they manage to go undetected.

In the aftermath of the bombing President Clinton directed the Department of Justice to assess the vulnerability of all Federal buildings to acts of violence and terrorism. I directed the U.S. Marshals Service to coordinate the Department's report.

The Marshals Service surveyed over 1,600 buildings and submitted a report to the Department of Justice last week. Based on the Marshals Service's survey, I will make a recommendation to the President regarding what measures need to be taken to enhance Federal building security across the nation. And we in Federal law enforcement will respond with a fully coordinated approach.

I am extremely proud of the effort and resolve shown by the men and women who have been and continue to be involved in this endeavor. But our work is not complete. We must all realize that while we are here today discussing our general efforts to combat terrorism, this particular investigation continues.

To meet future threats of this nature, President Clinton presented to the Congress and the nation a comprehensive and carefully considered program to combat domestic terrorism, to be

combined with an international terrorism package that he had already submitted to the Hill before the bombing.

Through the efforts of Chairman Hatch and Senator Biden and other Members of this Committee, the Senate recently passed terrorism legislation, S. 735, that incorporated the bulk of the President's terrorism package. We greatly appreciate your support on this important legislation and we look forward to its enactment.

Unfortunately, social and economic disruption stemming from violence and drug abuse continues to plague our society.

Although overall drug use has declined significantly since the 1980's, we are beginning to witness the development of two disturbing trends: increased drug use (and the decreased perception of danger) among the young; and increased heroin use, eased by the availability of smokeable heroin.

We have continued our efforts to attack international and domestic drug trafficking organizations that fuel the violence on our streets. We are simultaneously fighting three equally dangerous enemies: the Cali cartel, heroin traffickers from Asia, and violent domestic drug gangs. On each of these fronts, we are working with Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to identify and dismantle these drug trafficking

organizations. As we attain successes against these dangerous enemies, we are attentive to those who would seek to replace them and are poised to devote investigative and prosecutorial resources to address emerging enemies.

I have insisted that we eliminate duplication and overlap among the Department's investigative agencies. In response to the traditional turf wars among the Department's agencies, I established the Office of Investigative Agency Policies (OIAP) and asked Director Freeh to serve as its first Director.

That Office has authority within the Department to coordinate specified activities of the criminal investigative components and to advise me on criminal investigative policies, procedures and activities that warrant uniform treatment or coordination.

The result has been increased efficiency, better coordination, and reduced costs. For example, it would shock the average citizen to know that for many years, Federal law enforcement agencies refused to share drug intelligence with each other.

The Office mandated that the FBI and DEA establish a joint drug intelligence database. This database, now up and running, enables agents from each agency, as well as their state, local,

and Federal task force partners, to ascertain whether another agency is investigating a common target. When there is such a determination, coordination between the relevant agencies will be required.

Another example of improved coordination we have already seen is our strategy on the Southwest Border, an area of the country that has not received enough attention in the past. Today, the FBI, DEA, Border Patrol, and Customs are working with the relevant U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division in a coordinated initiative to target the major organizations responsible for importing the greatest amounts of cocaine and other drugs across the U.S.-Mexican border.

As we continue to enhance our law enforcement efforts, we must be aware of its effects on the prison system. One of the Bureau of Prisons' major objectives is to continue to expand prison capacity to keep pace with projected population increases.

I promised this Committee two years ago that I would tackle immigration as a serious priority, and I believe I am keeping that commitment. Just recently, I testified before this Committee on the progress we have made on this front.

The Administration's strategy to fight illegal immigration includes four basic elements: regaining control of our borders;

aggressively pursuing criminal aliens; expanding worksite enforcement to remove the job magnet and deport illegal workers; and providing the Immigration and Naturalization Service with the resources it needs to be effective.

The consistent bipartisan support from this and the Appropriations Committee for our enforcement strategy and immigration initiatives, has enabled us to: (1) increase the number of Border Patrol agents by 40% since 1993 and, for the first time, equip them with new technology and support so they can do their jobs effectively; (2) be the first Administration to reimburse states for the cost of incarcerating undocumented aliens; (3) work cooperatively with states and localities to verify eligibility for benefits programs of 126 agencies at over 2000 sites nationwide; and (4) nearly triple the number of criminal alien removals.

While we have some differences, I am pleased that the bill approved by the Immigration Subcommittee adopts so much of the enforcement strategy encompassed in the Administration's immigration bill.

This Administration is committed to the goal of expanding opportunity for all Americans in education, employment, and the economy generally. There will be no retreat from that commitment. That is why it is imperative that we enforce the

civil rights laws of this nation in a firm, fair way to eliminate discrimination.

Sadly, we continue to find acts of blatant discrimination. Those who question whether discrimination still exists in America need only look at the recent case the Civil Rights Division brought against Denny's, where a group of Secret Service agents, people who put their lives on the line to protect the President, were denied service at the restaurant because they were African-American.

The Civil Rights Division is addressing discrimination on every front. Attacking housing and lending discrimination is a high priority. A record number of new cases under the Fair Housing Act were filed in 1994 and that number will be exceeded this year. Enforcement of the requirements of the National Voter Registration Act has already, since January 1, 1995, resulted in the registration of 2 million new voters. Full implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act is also important. We have sought to foster voluntary ADA compliance through a toll-free information line, letters and technical assistance guides and the distribution of question and answer booklets.

We also have sent a clear message to those who would commit fraud against the Government that we are going to catch you and when we do, we will make you pay. This is no more evident than

in our commitment to reduce health care fraud.

In the last year, the Department has taken numerous steps to strengthen our efforts against health care fraud at both the national and local levels. As a result, the number of health care fraud matters investigated and prosecuted has risen dramatically. Our new joint enforcement effort with HHS, Operation Restore Trust, will target fraud in home health care, nursing homes, and ancillary services in five States.

We are committed to encouraging full use of the qui tam provisions of the False Claims Act and we have worked with Senator Grassley over the last year on this important measure.

The Environment and Natural Resources Division's enforcement of numerous environmental laws has upheld our obligations: to be stewards of our land and resources for future generations; to level the playing field for all enterprises so that we eliminate the false choice between a sustained environment and economic advancement; and that we create a sense of community that makes clear that our environmental resources are a shared commodity that we can all rely upon and must respect. Enforcement of our environmental laws has resulted in compliance and correction of violations, prevention of future harm and hazardous wastes cleanup.

A revitalized Antitrust Division has engaged in sound enforcement of the antitrust laws in order to protect competition and consumers in increasingly international and technology driven-markets.

The Tax Division has developed an impressive record of pursuing tax debts owed to the United States and defending the Government against unwarranted claims.

On the vital matter of filling judicial vacancies, I commend Chairman Hatch and the whole Judiciary Committee for the work that you have done so far this year. In my regular meetings with members of the Judicial Conference, they consistently remind me of the impact of vacancies on the Nation's criminal and civil justice system. I know that we can continue to work together to keep up the pace and prevent justice from being hampered by critical judicial vacancies.

This is only a brief summary of the progress we have made in the last year. I believe this is a record of which we can be proud. There is, of course, much more to be done and I look forward to working with each one of you to build upon this record. Thank you.