



ADDRESS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

Before the

National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO)

Introduced by Robert Scully

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:30 a.m.)

MR. SCULLY: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker. I think she is known to everybody in this room and everybody in law enforcement in the country. She has been the Attorney General of this country, under this administration, since they were first elected.

She, in my opinion, has done an outstanding job for law enforcement in the fact that she has opened up the door to the U.S. Department of Justice to the law enforcement community, to the point where our staff can call the Attorney General of this country or her staff, we can get our questions answered, we can get meetings when meetings are needed.

Many of you know that we had some major questions and concerns about the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. And for a little while, we were not having the greatest success at getting information out. When it was brought to the Attorney General's attention, that door was opened up, statistics were made available to us, and we have ongoing meetings now with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, with the Attorney General of this country. I had numerous meetings with the former Deputy Attorney General of this country before she stepped down several months ago.

All in all, it has been a good relationship. It has been an open-door policy. And, ladies and gentlemen, with that, I would like to introduce to you, it gives me a great deal of pleasure, the Attorney General of this country, Janet Reno.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much, Bob; and Tom; Bob; Ray Kelly, the Under Secretary of Enforcement; and all my friends in law enforcement. It is a great privilege to be here with you today.

I cannot thank NAPO enough. Bob says I have given you access, but you have given me ideas from the people who are on the front line in the fight against crime in America. And the opportunity to consult with you, to hear from you, to understand what your problems are, has been invaluable for all of us. You care so much about your community and your country, and, working together, I think we have made a difference.

I have watched on the difficult issues, when the President proposed 100,000 cops for the streets of America, when he proposed to get a tough, smart crime act passed, when he proposed the assault weapons ban and fought for it, when he fought for the Brady Act, NAPO was there and helped to get it passed, all of them passed, and to make a difference.

Bob Scully was one of the first people that I met when I came to Washington. Since then, each time there has been a difficult issue, each time, as recently, when we tried to figure out what the next best step with Brady was, I have

turned around and Bob Scully was there, with your thoughts, with incisive comment, with support that has made a difference.

Occasionally, just occasionally, we disagree. And, as you know, Bob is not a shy or retiring person. All I have to do is look over and see that jaw jutting out, headed my way, and I know there is trouble. But we usually work through these issues for our common goal, which is doing what is best for our community and our country.

But, mostly, I would like to thank the rank and file of your membership, the rank and file of departments across this country. Crime rates are down in big cities and small towns across America. There are many reasons. But, mostly, these rates are down. Mostly, this is a safer Nation because you and your colleagues were on the streets of America.

You were there, willing to put your life on the line. You were there, smart, well-trained and professional. You were there sometimes as a community police officer, who got a neighborhood to come out from behind closed doors, to trust, to believe in themselves, to work with you, and to take charge, and send the gang leaders to jail and take their community back for themselves.

You were there sometimes as the homicide detective who never gave up, who followed every lead, oftentimes ending in frustrating dead ends for 18 months or 2 or 3 years, who experienced the drudgery and the frustration, but who never gave up. And then, one day, everything clicked, and he felt he had his man. He got the indictment.

The case was tried. He testified under withering cross-examination, and he withstood it. He got the conviction. Watched the case go up on appeal. Watched it get reversed, through no fault of his own. Come back, 5 years later, testify, testify as strongly as he did before, withstand the same cross-examination, get the conviction, and this time see it upheld.

He got the career criminal who would have killed again except for his dedication and his commitment and his refusal to give up.

You have been there sometimes as a patrol officer who responded to a domestic, and persuaded the victim to testify, and got her to a shelter, and began to interrupt the cycle of violence. You have been there for the old lady, who has been robbed of all her savings by a smooth-talking con man, and you have traced assets and helped in some small measure to begin to make her whole again. And you were there in Oklahoma City on April the 19th, 1995, and in the days that

followed.

You have been there for us all, day in and day out, and made this a safer Nation, and I salute you and I thank you.

But we cannot rest. Law enforcement knows that better than anybody else. You know that our work requires eternal vigilance. There will be new hurdles and new challenges. As a gang fades out because of your enforcement efforts, others will try to come in to fill the vacuum. As crack fades as a drug of choice, a new drug, such as meth, will come in.

Let us discuss the challenges for the future and how we can join together, as we have joined on so many issues to date, to address them and to develop effective efforts.

I would like to discuss three issues. One, juvenile crime; two, racism and hatred; and, three, technology in the hands of criminals, but also technology in our hands to solve crimes.

First, with respect to juvenile crime, the figures are hopeful. Juvenile crime, violent crime, is down for the first year. The Bureau of Justice Statistics' Victimization Survey indicates that it is down significantly. The murder rate is down 2 years in a row. But we cannot be complacent with those figures, because the number of young people, at the same time, will grow significantly in the next 10 years. And unless we really get a handle on juvenile crime and violence, the problem will get much worse.

For these reasons, the President has focused on this issue. And this past February, I joined with him when he announced his new juvenile crime initiative, in Boston. Three weeks later, he called on Congress to pass a bill which has many of the hallmarks of the 1994 Crime Act. It is comprehensive. It is tough. And it is smart. It balances prevention and enforcement, and it takes into account the views of law enforcement.

Although juvenile justice is one of the five issues which the bipartisan leadership of Congress has agreed requires action, Congress has recessed and has not sent the President a bill for his signature. We are all very hopeful that Congress will act swiftly on its return, and send forward a bill he can sign.

The bill makes it easier for Federal prosecutors to direct file on juveniles, recognizing that serious violent offenders recidivists have blown their chance for the juvenile justice system. It provides for court and prosecuting initiatives for

State and local courts and prosecutors that will give them the time to really focus on the serious violent offenders and what should be done about them.

I know the frustration, the frustration a police officer feels after arresting a significant juvenile offender that has caused significant problems in the community, and only to find the case become one of numbers in a court that does not have time to focus. This bill can make a difference if it is properly funded.

The President's proposal would also require the sale of a gun lock with every gun sold. A locked gun is a gun oftentimes not worth stealing. It is also a gun which cannot be accidentally discharged. Tragic accidents can be prevented, as can wanton killings with stolen guns.

President Clinton has also directed every Federal law enforcement agency to supply its agents and officers with gun safety lock on or before October 15th of this year, whether or not Congress passes the legislation. I must admit that when the idea was first brought to my attention, I was concerned about the cost. I have now learned that these simple devices cost only about \$4.25. That seems to me a very small price to pay for something which can save a life.

Finally, President Clinton has also asked Congress to prohibit juveniles adjudicated with serious juvenile crimes from possessing firearms. It makes no sense that an 18-year-old who steals \$101 can never again possess a gun, while a 17-year-old murderer can buy a gun when he turns 18.

At the same time, in addition to enforcement, we have all got to work to prevent crime from occurring in the first place. Every good law enforcement officer knows that the one thing which any crime victim would ask for if given the choice is for the crime not to have occurred in the first place. The President's bill provides for prevention programs that work, based on what police officers around the country have told us -- supervised afternoon and evening programs, truancy prevention programs.

It probably comes as no surprise to you that over half of all serious juvenile crimes are committed in the 3 hours after school closes. That statistic cries out for a simple solution. If we are simply pouring our young people out of our school buildings and onto the streets, where they are becoming your problem, how about using the buildings and keeping them open later.

We are not talking about new construction. We are talking about a safe haven, where a young person can go, with friends, to participate in sports, learn on a

computer, or do his homework, because there is too much fighting at home to get any work done and because there is too much danger and pressure on the streets to be safe.

After-school programs such as this do not cost lots of money. The building is already there. The costs are low. That means we can do a great deal for very little money if we do it the right way.

One of the reasons we can is because of you and your fellow officers, who are there for these kids in city after city. Sometimes you are on duty. But I have seen you in my own hometown of Miami, and small towns across this Nation and our largest cities, after you have worked a 7:00 to 3:00 shift, you are out there volunteering as mentors, to make a difference.

But off or on duty, so many of you are involved in crime prevention programs that are making a difference in a youngster's life. Many of these programs were developed by the police themselves. The police would start to dismantle gangs, to focus on the gang leaders, to get them out of circulation and into the jail, only to see the little wannabees filling the vacuum. And it was the police who developed prevention programs aimed at providing alternative activities for the youngsters who were thinking of the gang.

In other places, police have reached out to the business sector. They have become partners with religious leaders. They have worked with the medical community. They have learned conflict resolution skills. They have worked together to develop job opportunities for youngsters. They are making a difference.

And sometimes it is just a police officer serving as a mentor. I watched two police officers from Dorchester, Massachusetts, come to the Great Hall in the Department of Justice. With them were three young men who said these two officers had turned their life around. I asked how the officers knew how to relate to the kids. And they said, Ms. Reno, it is not hard. We were young ourselves once. We know how important it is to have somebody to talk to, somebody that can understand how difficult it is to grow up, somebody that can make a difference in our lives.

So I would like to set up something in which I can hear from you, from NAPO, the good ideas on the front line that you are watching in action, where you can tell me that it is working and that it is not just a puff program, where you can tell me that it is having an impact on crime in your community, where you can tell me that it is reducing dropouts and giving kids a future.

You are some of the most realistic and hard-nosed people I know. And when you tell me some program or initiative works, I can rely on you and I can pursue it. Let's work together to provide a balanced effort of punishment and prevention based on good, solid what works and what does not.

The next issue that I would like to talk to you about is racism and hatred. People of all races have far greater opportunity in this Nation today, but we still see the vestiges of racism and the anger and the meanness it generates. We are all descended from immigrants, but we still see prejudice against those who look or speak differently.

We are a safer Nation, with less crime, but we still see the jarring, searing impact of crime generated by hate. All America is diminished when one among us is hurt or discriminated against because of race, creed or ethnic background. These are very difficult and they are very sensitive issues.

But my experience is that the good and dedicated police officers of this Nation, who are doing their duty, do as much as any other single group of people I know to dispel racism and bigotry and hate by their manner, their conduct and their approach to people. You are the protectors, the problem-solvers and the peacemakers for so many whose voices could not otherwise be heard.

The good police officer builds trust and respect among and with the people he or she serves. You calm the angry neighbors and give them understanding, each of the other, so that they can come to live together in peace and appreciation.

I would like to work with NAPO, to hear from officers across the Nation about what they are doing to combat racism, bigotry and hatred; what training and outreach programs are effective; what works and does not work in conflict resolution; how can we better learn to appreciate the diversity of this Nation and of our neighbors; how can we prevent hate crimes; how can Federal law enforcement be a better partner; what are the police departments across the country doing to bring communities together and to building stronger and better communities.

The third issue I would like to talk with you about is technology. I have always been impressed by the painstaking effort of a detective as he methodically pursues every lead. But I have also been amazed at the development of technology by shrewd law enforcement officers who think, now, let me see how I can make this work to my advantage, or officers who outwit others.

My first summer job was with the sheriff's office, in 1956. There was a small, tiny

laboratory there. I now look at the laboratory at the Dade County Metro Dade Police Department, and I marvel at what law enforcement has done to harness technology in solving crimes.

You are innovative. You are creative. And the good detective today can even outdo Sherlock Holmes, because you have got the technology that goes with it.

And yet we face some incredible challenges. Today computers and cyber tools permit somebody to sit at this little computer in St. Petersburg, Russia, and steal from a bank in New York. It permits somebody in Europe to get the numbers of all credit cards of a certain group, and then to extort them unless they pay a sum of money. It permits an attack on our information infrastructure, so that one computer hacker can disrupt power grids or bring down an emergency system.

It also provides us, however, incredible opportunities. Within 5 years or more, we are going to have crime scene techs at every scene, taking DNA samples, taking fingerprint samples, and immediately communicating them by computer to a database that can effect a match or tell us that we have the wrong person.

It is going to save you vast hours of time in pursuing leads that do not have to be pursued because you have eliminated a person. It is also going to permit photos and fingerprints to be sent to you in the squad car, so that you know who you are dealing with and you can take steps to protect your life.

There are extraordinary challenges, but the equipment involved is very expensive, and the expertise required to outwit the cyber-criminal, to outwit the terrorist who would attack our information infrastructure staggers the imagination. It is going to require that all of us work together -- Federal, State and local law enforcement -- to ensure that the sophisticated equipment is available not just to the Feds, but to everybody on a shared and thoughtful basis, and so that expertise is shared as partners.

But you will know best what you need. We can sit in Washington and make all sorts of decisions. But the bold and innovative officer on the street can say, if you just do this thingamajig differently, it would really help us.

I would like to establish an orderly procedure with NAPO so that we can hear from you about your problems in the field and what we can do in Washington, working with everybody concerned, to address the technology so that technology does not control us, so that the technology in the hands of the bad guy does not control us, but that we use technology to make this world a better place.

My father was a police reporter for the Miami Herald for 43 years. Police officers trusted him never to violate a confidence. And even today, police officers come up to me and tell me that he never wrote an inaccurate word. He would be the first to say that was not true, but he tried his level best to be as accurate as possible.

They gave him a badge, after he had been around the department for a while, as an honorary policeman. He prized that badge, and I still have it at my desk. I used to go to work with him, beginning in 1944, when I was 6 years old. And I would sit at his office at the police station, because he never went to the newspaper -- he kept his office at the police station. And I would hear people come in with all sorts of stories.

The officers would come out on weekends and sit under our rose apple tree and give daddy tips, but also tell stories, some of them funny, some of them gruesome, some of them so gruesome, we were scuttled off someplace else so we did not hear them. And then, in my summer jobs at the sheriff's department, I heard more. For 15 years, as the chief prosecutor in Miami, I heard the stories from police officers about what they had faced.

I road with them. Some still call and come to see me when they are in Washington, bringing me up to date on what they are doing. And now, for 4 years, I have listened and talked and met with and understood police officers from across the country. I have stood there and looked up at what was left of the Murrah Building.

And for over 50 years now I have listened to what police officers have to deal with -- the tragedies, the disasters, all the mean and evil and horrible things one human being can do to another. And all my life I have asked, how do police officers carry on without becoming totally cynical and burnt out?

And I find the answer when police officers describe the incredible kindness and goodness of so many citizens they deal with, the bravery of citizens they come in contact with, when they start telling the jokes and remembering the funny stories, when they remember the joys of the job, being thanked by the citizen whose life they saved or whose child they found. And over these years, I have come to understand why men and women give their lives to policing.

But then I go to the funerals, to the law enforcement vigil, and I marvel each time at your strength and your courage, as you leave these services and go out to protect the citizens of this Nation. I am so touched by those who loved, the survivors who carry on and who do so, so remarkably.

My conclusion is, after these 50 years of observing police officers and listening to your stories, that good police officers understand human nature and life itself better than anybody I know. You have known the saint and the sinner. And through your wisdom and understanding, you have come somehow to believe in the God-given strength and power and beauty of the human spirit.

Thank you for believing in people and for never giving up.

(Applause.)

MR. SCULLY: The issue is the law enforcement officer's bill of rights. We have a representative -- at least one -- from every one of the five unions in New York City present here. That police department, basically, had handcuffs removed from its officers several years ago, to go out and do something about the crime in New York City and enforce all laws, quality of life laws, and bring some quality of life back to the people in New York City. And they did an outstanding job, and crime is drastically reduced in New York.

I get there several times a year myself, and I can see it. I do not have to step over vendors on the sidewalks and bums, and my taxicab is not stopped with squeegee operators anymore. But with that also comes an increase in citizens' complaints. Because, unfortunately, most citizens do not really appreciate coming in contact with law enforcement, because usually it is during some type of a tragedy or they are on their way to jail. It is not a pleasant circumstance. And they are taught, the first thing in defense of your case, is file a complaint against the officer who arrested you.

That type of policing now has spread on to Boston, where homicides are just almost unheard of anymore in certain areas of Boston. But with that type of policing comes an increase in citizens' complaints.

I know New Orleans is adopting the same type of policing that New York has. And there are police departments around this country sending their leadership to New York City and to Boston to try to adopt those policies. But with that, Attorney General, comes citizens' complaints.

And we are the representatives of rank and file law enforcement officers, the ones that had the handcuffs removed from them, to go out and enforce these laws and clean up the streets of this country. Just before you got here, I had the opportunity to share with all the delegates here the polling results of our annual poll that we conduct of 800 registered voters.

And, once again, all of the questions that we asked of them concerning should police officers have the right to -- basically, a police officer's bill of rights -- the right to have counsel, the right to face your accuser, the right to review the complaint filed against you, the right to have a hearing before you are disciplined or fired. Everybody -- and I think every one of the categories was above 90 percent support, favored our position.

And as I always do, sticking my jaw out towards you, I am going to ask you the tough question once again, what do we have to do to get the support of the administration for rank and file cops in this country who are putting their livelihood on the line daily?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Bob.

I come from a State and work in a circumstance where we had a bill of rights. And I do not think it interrupted anything, either in service to the people that police officers served or in effectiveness.

What I am told by the lawyers in the Justice Department, because we come back and check each time, and it becomes progressively a concern, as we watched the decision in Prince and Brady and we watched the Lopez decision, is that there is a grave concern as to whether the Federal Government can legislate a bill of rights for States.

What I would like to do, as I always have, is continue to work with you on it. It is not a perfect answer by any means, but my door continues to be open, and let's continue to look at the legal issues. And if you would like us to sit down with your lawyers, we will be happy to do that.

But I think the decisions that we see, saying that the Federal Government cannot impose duties on States, is a significant issue that we are going to have to contend with.

Other questions?

MR. SCULLY: There is a floor microphone in the center here if anybody has a question. Please go to the microphone.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would also ask something, too. If any of you want to answer the question, if you were the Attorney General of the United States, how would you improve your support?

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: And I have got my pencil and piece of paper here.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, welcome.

I have not a question but a statement. Recently I left the capital of New York, which is Albany. And that week, a riot broke out at one of the social clubs in Albany, New York. About 200 people rioted outside a social club because they oversold tickets. And the police were called in.

They tried for almost 2 hours to quell the disturbance. And tolerance was used like we would not believe that in the past it was.

Well, anyway, what I am getting at is, right away, three youths were arrested -- youths. A 16-year-old youth was charged with about 12 or 13 felonies. A 16-year-old youth out at 2 o'clock in the morning at a social club where they sell alcohol. And right away the local chapter of the NAACP got involved in it and the statement was made by the local president that we will never know the truth because the police are involved.

You talked about racism. We have to understand that it is a two-way street. And I am not just picking out any group. I think sometimes the Justice Department has to look at the other side.

In this particular case, these officers were doing their job. They were restraining themselves in many ways after bottles and everything was thrown at them. We recently had fire fighters and police, where bottles are thrown at them at fires. And right away it is the same charge -- that we are picking on certain people. That is not the case.

We are, in New York State, we do not believe in hate crimes. But if we get it passed, I think it should go two ways. That if somebody throws bottles at police officers and fire fighters, I think that should be also be included as a hate crime.

I am just asking for you and the Justice Department to understand that it is both ways, and most of the time it is against us.

Thank you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Understand that the Justice Department does understand that. Because we get criticized in somewhat the same vein on

occasions. And we are trying in all that we do to make sure that the laws of the country are enforced the right way. But I can assure you that Federal agents get the same criticism.

What I have seen in police officers, as I point out, I think police officers understand better how to deal with these issues than many others. And what I would like to hear from is some of the officers who are reaching out to the NAACP and building bridges and developing alliances and establishing lines of communication.

I can assure you that the NAACP hollered at me a lot in Dade County because I did or did not do certain things. And one of the things that I discovered is I kept going back and talking to them. I never refused a meeting. I made sure it was a two-way street, though -- that they understood that there were responsibilities and that I was not going to back down when the law had to be enforced, that I was going to do it fairly, and they were going to have an opportunity to watch the action in the courtroom and satisfy themselves.

I think the more we can make it a two-way street, the more we can develop lines of communication, the more we can build on what great police officers are doing in community after community across this Nation, of communicating with residents, communicating with organizations, and building that trust that is so important, I think it will make a difference.

And they will come to understand that you are doing what you have to do in law enforcement. It is a difficult, difficult process. But this is what police officers do day in and day out. And in my way of thinking, they are an example for us all as to how to build that understanding.

MR. SCULLY: Are there any other questions?

Skip Murphy.

MR. MURPHY: Ms. Reno, as a border State, California has to deal with particularly the illegal immigrant problem. I had the pleasure of meeting with you and representatives from the Border Patrol here in Los Angeles about a year ago now to talk about some of the problems. I now have the unique opportunity to command two jails in San Diego County, of which 60 to 70 percent at any given time is made up of criminals who are in fact illegal aliens.

My question to you is, can you give us any insight into any secrets that are being held in somebody's back pocket as to how you are going to continue to address

the issue of crime specifically relative to illegal aliens?

Because it not only affects my folks, it affects everyone along the Southern Border.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: The issue of detention is one of the most difficult issues that we deal with. And, clearly, San Diego has been an example, because we have tried to provide the most vigorous enforcement possible and that immediately produces an overload. And the County has been magnificent. And I just personally want to thank you, and also to commend you for the job that you have done.

I work with Alan Burce, the U.S. Attorney, in that effort, and we are trying to identify -- my understanding is that the County has been in the process of constructing a jail and that we hope to be able to share in that. We also, as you know, transport prisoners to other parts -- I think as far north as San Bernardino -- and that is not a good solution.

The problem is probably worse as you go further east on the border, because we have tried to develop an orderly procedure of taking control of the border. And when you get down into areas like Nogales, there is very limited correctional facilities or space available. And so it is just something that we are working through. There is no perfect answer.

On the other side of the coin, one of the things that we have got to improve on is identifying illegal aliens who are serving prison time in State prisons and taking steps to have them processed before they are released from prison and before they are back on your streets or back in an INS detention facility, taking up limited space.

We would like to work with all concerned to try to focus, as Texas has, all the aliens in one place so we can get them processed in an orderly way. But we want to work with you in trying to do that, so that you will not have to face it.

We are also trying to identify -- it used to frustrate me when I would -- in Miami, I would identify an illegal alien who committed a crime. Then my victim would disappear and I could not prosecute the case and we were going to be faced with no-actioning it. And it was so frustrating because I knew that the guy was involved in other activities, but at that point we could not prove it.

And he was deportable. And I would call INS and say, could you come and get him?

At least this is one means of crime deterrence. And they did not have the resources.

Again, we are trying to build those resources. But the emphasis that has been placed both in Congress and by INS is on the border, to try to get a control there, and then spread across the Nation.

I just want to tell everyone, though, the example of San Diego and so many other places has just been so rewarding as to how -- the steps and the real work that local law enforcement has done to cooperate with us. And I deeply appreciate it.

MR. SCULLY: Richard.

QUESTION: Good morning, Ms. Reno.

On the issue of police entrance exams, several jurisdictions throughout this country -- specifically Long Island, Nassau and Suffolk County -- have been in lengthy litigation with the Justice Department on the way that the entrance exams have been given. They have entered into consent decrees, which have developed tests where almost everything relevant to being a police officer has been thrown out.

They have become personality profile tests. To the point where, if you have a 4-year degree, that is held against you and counted as a wrong answer if you mark it down on the test, because somebody decided that 2 years is what a cop should have.

Is there any way we can possibly get back to the merit and fitness standards that we used to have in this country?

And can the Justice Department work with the local municipalities to develop relative testing and not get so involved with the numbers game?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What I would be happy to do in that regard -- because I think this is one of most sensitive issues that we face, is to how we test and how we recognize the strengths of all Americans and their capacity to be police officers -- I do not know, Bob, if this is something that has been discussed in your meetings with the Civil Rights Division. Is it?

MR. SCULLY: No, it has not been discussed. But one of the questions we had on

the poll that we showed earlier was based on the case in Connecticut, where an individual was disqualified because he happened to be too qualified. So we made that part of our poll, and I know there is a deep concern on Nassau County specifically that I know about.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Let me do this, let me see if it would be appropriate -- I will get back to Bob and see if we can set this down as part of our agenda for discussion with the Civil Rights Division.

There are going to be times where there is not agreement. But what I have determined on so many issues, if we can sit down, we at least work through so many misunderstandings and come to some more consensus than we otherwise would. And in some instances, we are working it out very satisfactorily.

And, to that end, may I ask you all for suggestions. We have had a number of questions about different issues or construction of the law. And what we have found is sometimes helpful is the preparation of Q & A's that are helpful to police leaders and representatives that might be beneficial.

So think about something that we might do along that line as well. But I will follow up with Bob on that issue.

MR. SCULLY: I think I see another question.

VOICE: Hold it down to two more questions, okay.

MR. SCULLY: Gus.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, I just wondered, it seems that Federal prosecution of police officers and law enforcement officers in general has at least been on the rise or at least more publicized. And I think it has had a somewhat chilling effect on what the people on the street -- how they feel about going about doing their job.

It seems that we are ever concerned about what the press has to say, about whether a politician believes that there could be some political advantage to turning the issue into an issue that can help propel him in a race, whether the officer should be prosecuted or not.

And my question, I guess, is, what assurance can you give us that in fact these issues are really looked at based on their merits, not on the public sentiment or the press' sentiment?

I mean even in some of the actions that the Federal Government has taken in terms of some of the militia groups, it appears like people are afraid to take certain actions because the press is looking over your shoulder, some politician may not like the way you handled it.

What assurance can you give us that these things are really being factually looked at?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: If I were to worry about politics and what people said about me, I might as well go home.

(Laughter, applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What I would like to do is try to get -- if you did not mind, otherwise I will deal with Bob -- I would like to get your name, because that is interesting to me. I do not think it is going up, but I would like to go back and look -- look at the cases that we have prosecuted, and just satisfy myself that there has been a careful review.

I know, from all the cases that are brought to our attention where there are questions, we carefully review it. And sometimes even I have to make the decision.

I have prosecuted police officers. I have convicted one of a homicide. It is one of the most difficult, horrible things to have to do, particularly in a State context, where it may be a reckless shooting as opposed to an intentional shooting, and malevolence may not be a part of it. It is something that will weigh with me for all of my life, and it is something that I do not want to do unless the evidence and the law requires it.

And that is the way we try to review it and try to make sure that we are very careful in our efforts.

But I will get -- if it is okay, I will have somebody get back to you and go over. And I will personally look at what we have done and make sure that we are giving careful attention to every detail of the evidence and the law.

MR. SCULLY: Okay, one last question.

VOICE: Gus.

MR. EAST: Guston East from the Port Authority in New York.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, I am having a difficult time trying to understand the rationale on the two-tier system with respect to an alleged violation of civil rights against police officers. Can you explain to me what the down side would be to the justice system or to the American people if a police officer goes through one forum, such as a State court and not have to worry about Federal prosecution at a later date?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: The law is clear, because I used to wonder that myself when I would determine that cases should not be filed or we prosecuted and there was not a conviction, why should the Feds get into it?

But the law is clear that it is not double jeopardy. And there are circumstances where the Federal interests have not been vindicated in the State prosecution.

There is a very clear guideline spelled out, known in the lawyer terms as the Petit policy, of when we can prosecute. And we try to carefully adhere to those guidelines and carefully look, to make sure that it is not being abused.

So far as I know, during these 4 years, we have done a pretty good job of that. I have not seen any significant increase, to my knowledge. And we have tried to make sure that it has been appropriately applied.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SCULLY: Let me, just as a follow-up, I think, to Dave's question and to Gus' question, if you had an opportunity to attend our legislative and legal rights seminar -- I believe it was in April in D.C. -- it was an outstanding seminar, and one of the panels dealt with civil rights issues, and we had the then-Deputy Director of the Civil Rights Division spend approximately 2 hours with us, going over these types of questions. And it was a good, frank discussion.

I hope to carry that on at our next seminar, which will probably be next March or April, depending on congressional schedules. So if you get a chance, attend it. It was an outstanding seminar. A lot of valuable information came out of it. We want to build on that.

I can also assure you -- and I do not know if the Attorney General knows so much, but I know Nick Gess, who is sitting in front me, knows -- any time I read

about a case or a case comes to my attention specifically on the use of force, that the Justice Department may be looking into, I am on the phone to them. I do whatever I can to interject our feelings and our thoughts, and try to make sure that there is a fair investigation conducted. And I do get a good dialogue going with the Department of Justice and the Civil Rights Division.

The one cases I have not gotten involved in and I probably will not get involved in are ones dealing with police corruption. But use of force, where there is a split-second decision, that is something that I am really concerned with. And if you bring cases to my attention, I will guarantee I will follow up with the Department of Justice on those cases.

With that, I would like to make a presentation to the Attorney General. This, again, is our top cop poster child, our award that we give out each year at our top cop ceremonies. And this is:

To Attorney General Janet Reno. Thanks for your support of America's finest. The National Association of Police Organizations. Presented August 11, 1997.

(Whereupon, the award was presented.)

(Applause.)

MR. SCULLY: And this can be a test, the next time I am in her office, I am going to see if it is sitting on her desk, next to her father's badge.

(Laughter.)

(Whereupon, at 10:16 a.m., the meeting concluded.)