



# Department of Justice

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Address by  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK  
Before the  
NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE  
of the  
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME & DELINQUENCY  
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Crime in America has many faces. Each exists because we are what we are. Our national character and condition create these capabilities for crime, cause us to suffer them, inhibit commitment to their control.

The motives of most are economic. Ninety percent of all serious crimes are against property. Many of the crimes against persons--muggings, kidnappings, assaults and murders--are incidental to property crimes.

White collar crime--embezzlement, fraud, swindling, price-fixing, tax evasion--often the acts of respected and successful people, wrests millions annually from the public. The consequences to its victims are often as dire and direct as those that follow the thief, the burglar and the robber; frequently more so, because white collar crime can dig deeper than the purse in the bureau drawer or the wallet in the pocket to wipe out the savings of a family or a firm and its stockholders. Few crimes so corrode moral standards.

Crime in the streets, as it has come to be called, the widespread occurrence of general crimes, plague the nation. A steady rise in reported crime is a source of deep concern to

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our people. Over three million serious crimes were reported last year with perhaps as many unreported. Here is our most pervasive and dangerous crime. It strikes capriciously, frequently; anywhere, anytime, anyone. But mostly it strikes the poor and the defenseless. It enlists our youth by the tens of thousands and sets them against society. It creates an atmosphere of fear that can destroy the self-confidence of a nation and the freedom of its people. It is by far the greatest challenge crime presents America today. It will be by far the most difficult to control.

An emerging defiance of law to demonstrate dissent or to disrupt is often a cause more of inconvenience than of injury. It has rarely elevated human dignity or the worth of the individual. Perhaps more significantly it lends to an atmosphere of contempt for social stability.

Extremist groups of the right and left--the Ku Klux Klan, the Minutemen, the Revolutionary Action Movement, Deacons for Defense and Justice--present another face of lawlessness. Capable of violence and intimidation, they are a concern to law enforcement and a threat to the public.

Rioting with vast property destruction, looting and sniping, injury to thousands and death to scores has visited the nation over four consecutive summers now. It threatens our quest for equal justice, our ability to build great cities where every American child will have his chance for fulfillment. Wild and irrational, riots destroy property, people, opportunities and dreams alike.

Today we examine organized crime. Here is planned, systematic continuous criminal activity: organizations, large and small, loose and tight, that live at the expense of society through the violation of its laws by force and stealth.

As with the other faces of crime, it must be viewed in context. All are interrelated as social phenomena, as criminal activity and as crime control problems. Each must be approached with perspective and balance.

Many find it difficult to believe there is organized crime. But of course there is, as history, experience and reason all prove. The Mafia made its presence known in the United States in the last decades of the 19th Century. Each decade of this century has known various conspiracies of professional criminals. In a society in which nearly every form of human activity is organized, is it realistic to believe criminal activity will not be?

Crime has proven to be far too profitable in our society to expect an absence of organization in its execution.

No simple definition or description of organized crime is possible. Our society is too complex for that. There is no single massive organization that manages all or even most planned criminal activity throughout the country. There are cohesive groups exhibiting similar patterns of criminal conduct, with deference for the interests and areas of each other, that reach major parts of the nation. There are many small groups active in particular geographic areas that are independent of outside control. Together, these professionals constitute a major problem for law enforcement and an important challenge to society.

President Johnson's Crime Commission surveyed 71 cities in its study of organized crime. Nineteen acknowledged the existence of organized crime in their city. Nine failed to respond. Of these, six are known to have some organized crime. Four of the five cities with more than one million citizens indicated the presence of organized crime. Of the cities surveyed, only one in five with populations between 250,000 and 1,000,000 acknowledged any organized crime. More than half of the handful of smaller cities surveyed between 100,000 and 250,000 thought they had organized crime. Federal intelligence indicated the presence of organized crime in some cities where local reports denied it.

Of the 19 cities reporting the presence of organized crime, only 12 had specialized police units to deal with it and only six had prosecutors specifically assigned to it.

The activities of organized crime are wide ranging, but gambling is by far its greatest source of income. Gambling lends itself to criminal conduct.

Loan sharking, often called shylocking or juice, is generally believed to be the second most significant source of income. Here, as with gambling, organized crime must deal with large numbers of people. To protect its interest and accomplish its purpose, as in collections, pressure and violence are used as necessary. The end justifies any means.

Extortion, blackmail, and shakedowns are frequent practices. Importation and wholesaling of narcotics engage many groups in organized crime though in recent years the retail

trade is often left to the small time pusher. Prostitution, bootlegging and related alcoholic beverage violations are common enterprises.

Increased sophistication and affluence have led organized crime into many legitimate businesses, labor activities and government services and contracts, licensing and zoning. Here they bring all the strong-armed tactics, violence and unprincipled conduct they practice in illegal areas. Firms have been bilked of assets, fraudulent stocks issued, planned bankruptcies executed, trust funds and loan accounts manipulated, and competitors driven out by unfair trade practices and criminal acts.

Generally organized crime as distinguished from ordinary crime supplies goods or services wanted by a large number of people: the chance to gamble, the loan of money, narcotics, prostitutes. An aroused community leadership can do much to limit its sales.

Because it is an on-going business, with payrolls to meet, dealing with hundreds or thousands of people, organized crime cannot flourish without protection. At the very least local law enforcement must be neutralized because major organized crime activities cannot be effectively concealed. Significant continuing gambling, shylocking, narcotics traffic, prostitution, extortion and other widespread organized criminal acts cannot long escape the notice of law enforcement.

Perhaps the greatest harm to come from organized crime is the corruption of officials. This affects a community in ways well beyond the reach of the criminal activity itself. Where some police are corrupt, law enforcement generally is likely to be bad. Where government officials are bribed, the moral climate of the whole community is likely to be affected; public confidence is undermined, cynicism takes hold.

Organized crime is a major concern of federal law enforcement. For seven years the federal government has waged an intensive campaign against a tenacious and deeply rooted enemy.

The current drive is the most comprehensive and successful yet undertaken. The Organized Crime and Racketeering Section of the Department of Justice which, directly and through U. S. Attorneys' offices, handles organized crime cases, has the largest legal staff of its history now working exclusively in organized crime.

Indictments returned as a result of its efforts have risen from 19 in 1960 to 1,197 in 1966. Convictions over the same period have risen from 45 to 477. Between fiscal years 1964 and 1967, convictions of organized crime and gambling figures resulting from FBI investigations have risen 300 percent, from 64 to 197. Of 182 federal indictments and convictions of known members of the Cosa Nostra in the last 12 years, 66, more than one-third, have come in the last 12 months. Included are some of the highest ranking members of this major crime syndicate ever caught.

Criminal intelligence supplied to local law enforcement by federal agencies has had an even greater impact on organized crime. In fiscal 1967, the FBI disseminated over 250,000 items of intelligence regarding organized crime resulting in 3,600 arrests for violation of state law. Criminal intelligence supplied by the FBI has resulted in 174 raids of organized crime operations and 674 arrests in the past four months.

A new and highly effective technique already tested in a major northeastern city involves the "Strike Force" concept. A special team, the "Strike Force," staffed by Organized Crime and Racketeering Section attorneys and selected federal investigators from several key agencies, carefully coordinate with state and local law enforcement. An intensive correlation of intelligence guides special investigation, raids, grand jury investigation and action followed by prosecution. Superimposed on regular law enforcement and with no other assignment than to find and prosecute organized criminal conduct, the "Strike Force" can deliver major blows to organized crime and leave local law enforcement in control. A series of strike forces are being planned for centers of organized crime.

For better than a year now, the Department of Justice has conducted meetings in major cities across the country to alert local law enforcement and to intensify and better coordinate local, state and federal action directed at organized crime.

The Department will continue its efforts against organized crime in the months ahead. This is an area where the federal government must play a major role. The interstate nature of much of the more extreme organized crime activity and its ability to neutralize local law enforcement make this imperative.

But we must not look to the federal government to eliminate organized crime any more than we can look to it to control crime in the streets, or riots. Excellence in local law enforcement is the sine qua non of any effort to eliminate

organized crime. Without this, little can be permanently accomplished. It is local police that patrol the streets and alleys and see and know the activities of the people. It is local police that are present in adequate numbers to deal with organized gambling, shylocking or prostitution. It is state and local laws that are violated by most organized crime activity. It is the duty of local police to enforce those laws.

Crime in the streets can only be controlled and reduced. Organized crime can be eliminated. There are whole nations and societies relatively free of its scourge. A key will be the professionalization of local law enforcement: raising standards, training officers to meet the varieties of criminal conduct committed, paying salaries that will attract the best among us, providing adequate force, research and development, organization and leadership to bring excellence to local law enforcement throughout the nation. It is a happy fact, though no coincidence, that fulfillment of this same great need will aid in the arrest and reversal of the trends toward lawlessness in the other faces of American crime.