



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

JANET RENO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE

CONCERNING

THE OVERSIGHT OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

PRESENTED ON

JULY 28, 1994

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the work of the Department of Justice.

First, let me say how much I have appreciated the support and many courtesies that you Mr. Chairman, Senator Hatch and other Members of this distinguished panel, have shown to me and the Department of Justice in the 16 months since I was confirmed as Attorney General. We have worked closely together, on a bipartisan basis, on a wide variety of issues. I look forward to that cooperative working relationship continuing in the future as we address our shared agenda to make our streets and neighborhoods safe, protect our children, preserve our environment, guarantee civil rights and ensure a competitive and fair international marketplace.

When I testified before this Committee at my confirmation hearing in March of last year, we discussed these common goals. I said I wanted to use our resources wisely to combine the forces of Federal, state and local law enforcement to combat crime, especially violent and juvenile crime. I pledged to do all I could to preserve and protect families and children. Describing the beautiful landscape of my home state, I promised to enforce this nation's laws to protect our environment. Recalling my own experiences with discrimination, I committed to fully enforce the civil rights laws. And we spoke of the need to ensure the highest levels of excellence, integrity and professionalism at the

Department of Justice. These are the goals we share. And as I travel around the country and talk to people, I become more convinced that this is what they believe in too and what they want us to do.

I am proud of the steps we have taken and the progress we have made to achieve these goals in the past 16 months. And let me emphasize how very proud I am of the thousands of dedicated and hard-working men and women of the Department of Justice who strive every day to make these goals a reality. The record of achievement of the Justice Department is their success story.

Violent Crime

Violent crime is a primary concern of Americans throughout the nation and it is the top priority of the Department of Justice. Violent crime has reached a new level of viciousness and randomness during the past decade. In high crime neighborhoods, the lives of the next generation of American adults are being misshaped by constant exposure to violence. The fundamental right of all Americans to live their lives free from fear of violence has been placed in peril.

Although violent crimes have traditionally been handled primarily by state and local law enforcement officials, the federal government must do more, and the Department of Justice is doing

more, to assist those agencies. The solution to the nation's violent crime problem lies in the forging of coalitions of federal, state, and local law enforcement which draw on the particular strengths of each component agency.

In an effort to develop such a partnership, the Department has embarked on a national Violent Crime Initiative. Under this program, each United States Attorney has formed a violent crime working group consisting of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to focus on violent crime. The role of each district group is to assess and prioritize the district's violent crime problems, to develop a strategy to address the highest priority problems and to oversee the implementation of that strategy.

The results are already being felt:

-- In Charlotte, North Carolina, the U.S. Attorney's Office joined with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to target the violent "James gang." This resulted in a 30-count federal racketeering indictment against ten alleged members for robbery, kidnapping, and drug trafficking.

-- In New York City, cooperation among all levels of law enforcement resulted in a 33-count federal racketeering

indictment in Manhattan against 20 alleged members of the Almighty Latin King Nation gang for murder, attempted murder, and conspiracy to murder.

The Department also continues to support the operation of an ongoing firearms initiative: Operation Triggerlock. Under this program, U.S. Attorneys coordinate with local law enforcement to identify dangerous criminals who are subject to prosecution under federal firearms statutes which provide for lengthy terms of imprisonment. During the past year, more than 5,000 defendants have been prosecuted federally under this program, with an average prison sentence of 100 months. Over 80% of those prosecutions have targeted felons who possessed firearms or persons who possessed firearms during the commission of a federal crime of violence or drug trafficking crime.

Crime Bill

An essential part of our efforts to combat violent crime is prompt enactment of the Crime Bill. This bill contains all the major components of the Administration's anti-crime program, including:

-- Funding for 100,000 new police officers;

-- "Three strikes and You're Out" for recidivist, violent offenders;

-- A ban on assault weapons;

-- More prisons and boot camps;

-- The Violence Against Women Act and

-- Sensible and effective prevention measures to give our young people "something to say YES to."

I hope to be able to continue to work with Members of this Committee to ensure that the Crime Bill gets sent to the President as soon as possible.

As a down-payment on the President's commitment to add 100,000 police officers to the nation's ranks, DOJ awarded \$150 million to 250 jurisdictions through the Police Hiring Supplement program. More than 2,000 new police officers will be on the streets in these communities as a result of these grants.

The fight against illegal drugs remains one of this Administration's highest priorities. DOJ has worked closely with Director Brown to implement the Administration's drug strategy. In

1993, DEA initiated 14,000 cases and arrested 21,000 defendants.

Director Freeh has made major innovative changes which are increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the FBI. He has initiated a reorganization plan which will put every available agent on the street investigating crime. He has also formed a Critical Incident Response Team at Quantico to manage major crises and has created separate units to aggressively address crimes involving children and serial killers.

To enhance cooperative efforts among federal law enforcement agencies I appointed Director Freeh the first Director of Investigative Policy. In this capacity Director Freeh has taken significant steps to enhance the coordination of all DOJ investigative activities and has enlisted cooperation from other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

Examples of the kind of coordinated partnerships we must continue to forge are OJP's Project PACT - Pulling America's Communities Together - and comprehensive communities program. PACT is developing broad-based, coordinated local and statewide strategies to reduce crime and youth violence through a multi-agency comprehensive planning process. OJP has worked to bring cohesion and synergy to its discretionary funding program through the Comprehensive Communities Program. Sixteen communities facing

high rates of drug and violent crime have received planning grants to help them develop a comprehensive strategy for crime and drug control and crime prevention.

Health Care Fraud

Health care fraud has emerged as the white collar fraud crisis of the nineties, preying upon our nation as did financial institution fraud in the eighties. Approximately 10 percent of all health care expenditures, or as much as \$100 billion, may be lost in fraud each year. Fraud not only increases the cost, but also diminishes the quality, of our health care.

In recognition of the severity of this crisis, I made health care fraud a top priority and designated a coordinator of the Department's health care fraud enforcement efforts. During the past fiscal year, we increased the number of health care fraud investigators and prosecutors by 40%.

These efforts have already had an impact. In the past year, the number of criminal health care fraud matters investigated has increased by 43 percent and the number of civil health care fraud matters by 93 percent. The amount of money recovered this fiscal year is already double that collected last year. Just last week, in the largest health care fraud case to date, the Department entered a settlement with National Medical Enterprises whereby the

company pleaded guilty and agreed to pay a record \$379 million in criminal fines, civil damages and penalties for kickbacks and fraud.

Immigration

Last month I testified before this Committee about the progress we have made in the past year in developing and implementing an effective and efficient immigration policy. Our includes four basic elements:

- regaining control of our borders;

- aggressive pursuit of criminal aliens, including reform of the asylum process and enforcement of employer sanctions;

- providing INS with the resources it needs and

- encouraging legal naturalization.

We are beginning to see improvements and Commissioner Meissner and I will continue to give these efforts our highest commitment.

Prisons

As we continue to enhance our law enforcement efforts we must be aware of the effects on the prison system. One of the Bureau of Prison's major objectives is to continue to expand prison capacity to keep pace with projected population increases. From January 1993 to June 1994, BOP's total inmate population grew from 80,505 to 93,919 -- an increase of more than 16 percent. During the same period, the Bureau added 9,820 beds through new construction, expansion, and revised capacity guidelines. More than 40,000 beds are now under some phase of development, to be completed by 1998. While expanding, BOP is simultaneously striving to contain costs and increase efficiency wherever possible.

The Bureau of Prisons also provides programs to combat the idleness that can lead to disruptive activity, while providing inmates with the opportunity to learn the skills they will need to become productive, law-abiding citizens upon release. Accordingly, drug treatment, education and vocational programs kept pace with the expansion in prison populations.

Civil Rights

Vigorous enforcement of our laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, and disability has been one of my highest priorities. The Civil Rights Division is charting a course that will put the Department of

Justice in the forefront of efforts to build a society in which all people will have the opportunity to thrive and achieve their fullest potential.

For example, the Department is pushing ahead energetically to enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act. We will provide technical assistance to those seeking to comply with the law and enforce the law against those who resist its mandate to give individuals with disabilities an opportunity.

The Department has been active in protecting the voting rights of minorities and individuals who speak languages other than English and we have taken steps to ensure state compliance with the National Voter Registration Act. We have worked to eliminate discrimination in mortgage lending and have continued enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, pursuant to which we have filed a record number of cases over the past eighteen months.

The Department recently obtained the most comprehensive settlement ever in a suit to redress racial discrimination in the area of public accommodations. The Department has continued its enforcement of criminal civil rights laws and has also moved forcefully against perpetrators of racial and religious violence.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of passage of the Civil

Rights Act of 1964, and the resulting creation of the Community Relations Service. I am very proud of the work that CRS does to resolve community wide racial and ethnic tensions. I believe that we have the capacity to forge the partnerships among diverse communities that will determine whether the Nation functions in an environment of equal opportunity and respect for our differences, or one of fear and hostility among armed camps.

Environment

The Environment and Natural Resources Division continues to pursue two overarching goals: to protect the public health and safety of all Americans by striving to provide clean air, clean water, and uncontaminated land, and to engage in the sound use of our precious natural resources. Our major enforcement goal is to achieve integrated enforcement: to ensure that a full range of civil, criminal and administrative enforcement tools are brought to bear under the pollution control statutes, and to strengthen the role of citizen suits and join with the states in enforcement partnerships.

Our record in enforcing the pollution control laws improves every year. Fiscal year 1993 marked the fifth straight billion dollar year for the recovery of civil penalties, court-ordered defendant cleanups, EPA cleanup cost recoveries and natural

resource damages. Our environmental crimes program has also achieved a steady increase in the number of indictments, pleas and convictions for environmental crimes, more than quadrupling these numbers in the ten years since that program's inception.

Antitrust

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. It has undertaken major initiatives in the past twelve months in the areas of civil conduct, mergers, international enforcement and criminal enforcement. A record 22 transactions have been challenged, restructured, or abandoned as a result of Antitrust Division initiatives and the Division has approved three major transactions in the telecommunications industry in the past year.

The Antitrust Division is also committed to enforcing our laws against foreign anticompetitive practices that directly affect U.S. commerce and has filed several precedent-setting cases in this area. Our criminal enforcement program remains vigorous bringing 84 criminal cases against in FY 93 against 63 corporations and 50 individuals resulting in fines of \$42 million.

Civil and Tax Fraud

We 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. Since the beginning of this Administration, the Justice Department has collected \$1.4 billion in civil fraud cases. These have included the largest civil health care and the largest defense contractor qui tam fraud cases in history. In addition, the Civil Division has effectively defended the government against billions of dollars in contract, patent, and other such commercial claims, and fought to protect consumers from defective products and unsafe food.

The Tax Division, through a combination of various civil and criminal tax enforcement mechanisms including collecting tax debts in bankruptcy courts, enforcing motor fuel excise tax compliance and prosecuting false claims for tax refunds, has developed an impressive record of pursuing tax debts owed to the United States and defending the Government against unwarranted claims.

Public Integrity

Maintaining the integrity of the Department's employees and its programs is one of my highest priorities. The American people deserve to know that every tax dollar is well-spent and that Department of Justice employees conduct themselves honestly and ethically. The IG has proven its effectiveness as a watchdog and has stepped up its scrutiny of the Department's grant programs.

The Office of Professional Responsibility has substantially reduced its backlog of open investigative matters. As of today, only 56, or 3.8% of the 1442 matters pending as of June 30, 1993, remain open. In addition, OPR is moving to sharply reduce the time between receipt of allegations against Department personnel within its jurisdiction and the commencement of an inquiry into the allegations. We have also initiated a policy providing for public disclosure of the results of OPR investigations where disclosure would not conflict with legitimate law enforcement interests or with the privacy interests of Department employees.

Conclusion

This is only a brief summary of the progress we have made in the past 16 months. I believe this is a record of which we can be proud. There is, of course, much more work to be done and progress to be made and I look forward to working with the Committee to build upon this record.

Allow me to close with a personal observation. In the Attorney General's conference room there are two murals painted high on the walls on opposite ends of the room. These vivid paintings are representations of "Justice Denied" and "Justice Granted." As visitors enter the room they are confronted with the comforting site of Justice Granted -- freedom, equality, peace, security and harmony. As I sit in my place in the room, however, I face the

sobering image of the horrors of Justice Denied -- tyranny, repression, censorship, racism, victimization and violence -- all dispensed by a malevolent authority that masks its evil nature behind a benign facade. This image serves as a constant reminder and daily inspiration to me of the need to be vigilant against the dangers of injustice in our society. Working together, we can fulfill the mission of assuring the blessings of justice for every citizen in this nation.