



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Press Conference

THE HONORABLE JANET RENO, ATTORNEY GENERAL

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9:35 a.m.

P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:35 a.m.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Good morning. Thank you.

How was your vacation?

VOICE: Good.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: This morning I am very pleased to welcome two guests: Secretary of Education Dick Riley, and Jack Calhoun, the Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Council.

We are here today because I think it is important that America come together to deal with the issue of youth violence. We have seen tragedies in these last days. In the past few months, Americans have watched a series of terrible killings unfold in our schools. Each time, the loss of life has seemed senseless. But these tragedies do not happen at random. So often, they represent the tragic conclusion in a chain of neglect, alienation and easy access to guns.

That is why law enforcement will never be able to solve these problems on our own. Nor can our teachers. America must come together. And we do not have a moment to spare. If Americans in every community are alert to the warning signs of youth violence, we can act before tragedy strikes.

Today we are taking another step to mobilize concerned Americans everywhere. Working with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Crime Prevention Council has developed a series of public service ads to help energize more people to fight crime. These two videotapes are being distributed around the country.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Calhoun, and your colleagues for the great work that you do in this whole area.

MR. CALHOUN: Thank you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We will see some of these now.

(Whereupon, two videotapes were shown.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: When viewers call the number, 1-800-WE-PREVENT -- that's 1-800-937-7383 -- they will find out how they can make a difference. We hope that parents everywhere will do more to take an active role in their child's school, insist on knowing their child's friends, whereabouts and activities, and recognize that keeping an unlocked gun at home may place their family at risk.

Teachers will be encouraged to report threats of violence and signs of gang activity as soon as possible, and to encourage the spread of conflict resolution and anger management skills, which can be so successful.

And young people will be encouraged to start a school crime watch, to become peer counselors, and to help others settle their disputes without violence. These are practical, common sense actions, and they make every school in America safer.

Later this morning, Secretary Riley and I are going to meet with students at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria. We are going to listen to their ideas and their suggestions about ending school violence. The youth of America have tremendous wisdom. They have an understanding, and oftentimes they will tell me, why don't you listen to us? And I try to listen to them on every occasion.

Secretary Riley has been such a leader in this effort to involve young people. I have been delighted at the cooperation between our two Departments on this issue and so many issues affecting young people in America. And I am pleased to welcome you and Mr. Calhoun to the Department of Justice today.

SECRETARY RILEY: Thank you so much. I am so honored to be here with the Attorney General and Jack Calhoun, and talk about really what steps we are taking and can be taken to help communities reduce this threat of school violence.

The Attorney General and I went to Jonesboro for the memorial service a week or so after that terrible incident there. And it was a very moving evening. Probably as much a moving evening as I have ever been involved in. And I know the Attorney General would share that view.

We met with the families. One of the interesting things was what I consider one of the real heroines of that community, Karen Kirtner, a small, petite woman, who is the principal of that school. And she stood up before this enormous crowd and this national attention and made one of the most thoughtful, powerful, but tender, statements I have ever heard.

We have been working hard to make our schools safer, and all of these incidents, of course, brought it more clearly to our minds. But I think it is important to remember, in a recent survey, 90 percent of the schools reported that they are absolutely free of serious violent crimes -- 90 percent. Our schools are generally very safe places to be and to learn.

This is an issue that will continue to receive a lot of attention from both of our Departments. The Attorney General and I have had a very close working relationship, and we will continue that. But I think we all need to tighten up our own programs, to make them more effective. That should be our constant attention.

We came forth with our principles of effectiveness that we sent out to all of our Safe and Drug-Free School Program people, to really help tighten down that whole program, from place to place. The President, as you know, has just announced the White House School Safety Conference, on October the 15th. And that is of course something we will be hearing more about. During that period, we will issue a national report, along with the Department of Justice, on school safety.

We are working closely with the Justice Department and a group of national experts to develop an early warning guide that will be ready the beginning of this upcoming school year. Schools are really asking for help in identifying truly troubled young people. And research is out there that can be helpful.

And at the same time, we are very, very cautious -- and I will be very sensitive to

this issue -- and that is sorting out young people and over-labelling or stigmatizing them -- I am going to be very sensitive to that. But we are going to provide an early warning guide, which we hope will be helpful.

We also need to start listening, as Janet said. And that is what we are going to start that process this morning, really, in a very established way, to get out in the schools, with diverse students, to really talk to us about problems and what we might do to respond to it. I think adults, though, in this country have got to realize that part of all of this is the speed of their lives. And all of us, all of us in this room, need to probably slow down our lives, be more attentive to our children, spending more time with them.

One of the saddest findings to come out of all these killings is that many young people in the school were aware that something was going on, and they did not involve adults into that conversation. So I think we need to connect up every child in this country. A lot of children have unfortunate family situations, where they really do not have adults that connect up with them. And then they do not connect up with their teacher in their school. And we think it should be a goal of this country that every child have at least some caring adult to connect up with.

Our High Hopes Program that we have proposed, that is in our Education Act reauthorization, in conference, contains such a program for middle school children, connecting up with college and adult students. The America Reads is the same for elementary age children who are having trouble reading, to make those connections. We think that is very important -- this business of connecting up.

When a child is expelled from school for bringing a gun, we need to create some new systems to make sure these young people get help and get it fast. One of the things that most disturbs me about the Gun-Free Schools Act, which is a good act and it is a proper act, is finding that only 56 percent of the over 6,000 young people who were expelled for bringing guns to school got sent to some sort of alternative placement. And that is a very bad number to put out there. And that is something we have got to do something about. That is not good enough.

It is one reason why my Department is starting a major study on alternative schools. And I think that they are on the increase now, but need to be increased a whole lot more.

I will also say that many of our education initiatives that are now stalled on the House and Senate floors or committees, such as class size, modernizing our schools, expanding after school programs -- all of these go to the very heart of this issue.

The Attorney General and I and our staffs had in some 26 chief security officers from 26 of the largest school districts in America, representing over 7,000 schools and 5 million children. This is the areas we hear that are often troubled. Over the last year, they reported to us three children were killed in this large school area. And none were in school. One was in a parking lot, as you recall, in Fairfax. The other two were on the way to or from school.

So I think it is important to stand back. These people told us that -- these were law enforcement people -- that if they looked at anything that would help this issue -- they all generally said this -- small class size. That amazed me. These were law enforcement people -- big, burly people, who were really into law enforcement. They thought class size for early grades -- one, two, three, and four -- where teachers could get to know children and to connect up with them and could observe difficulties they were having would be the best thing we could do in this area.

And, finally, let me say a word about guns and unsupervised children. That is a mix that does not work. Suzanne Wilson, another one of the -- the mother of one of the children who died in Jonesboro, was at the White House, and Janet was there. And she talked about gun safety. It was very hard for her to come forth. She was emotionally touched, needless to say. But she came there and tried to help out.

She had a great loss, but she was really trying to help others help. And I felt for her. And she made a very beautiful statement, I thought. Her message was that people who own guns -- and she indicated in her State that guns and fishing and hunting were very popular, and she was not opposed to that in any way -- but she said in a very profound way that people who own guns have a responsibility for owning those guns.

And that is why the administration supports a tough, targeted child access prevention law, similar to Carolyn McCarthy and Dick Durbin's provisions, which failed in the Senate last night. Reasonable people ought to see this really as a child safety issue. And that is how we hope it goes forward.

There is no one solution to keeping people safe. We have to be comprehensive. And we believe that a serious strategy of early intervention, tuning in to young people, connecting up with them, a strong emphasis on school-wide prevention efforts, and real accountability for young people who do get in trouble and should face the consequences of trouble in a fair and positive way. I think these kinds of things will make a big difference.

Thank you.

QUESTION: General Reno and Secretary Riley, last night and the day before, on the other gun measure that was backed by the administration. Do you plan any new legislative strategies or any changes in proposals, to try to address the gun issue in regards to children?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We are going to continue to review all our options. I think it is imperative that we take common sense steps to protect our children. The defeat of the child safety lock is the defeat of just a common sense, reasonable solution to make sure that guns are not accessible to children. And it is efforts like these or variations that we will continue to pursue, because I think the American people support them.

SECRETARY RILEY: You know, the President announced, General, when we were over there that I guess the Treasury Department was going to have posted at every place where guns are sold that it is Federal law, anyone who buys a weapon is responsible for it. And as far as transferring it to a minor or someone else, that that is a responsibility they have. So, you know, there is something out there now, really, that -- an awareness of that is very important. And we are going to have those signs clearly posted throughout the country, in every location where guns are sold.

QUESTION: Secretary Riley, I wonder how significant that figure is of 90 percent of all schools are safe from serious violence when the incidents that -- the deadly incidents that erupted in Springfield, Oregon and in Jonesboro, and probably in Mississippi, too, came in school districts where there had been no history of serious violence. In other words, it could break out in any of these safe schools. So, instead of thinking that 90 percent of the schools are safe, is the figure really zero?

SECRETARY RILEY: Well, you know, you can say that about anywhere people are located. You know, this room is not 100 percent safe with all of his here.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY RILEY: As humble a crowd as this is.

But I do think this. We have to look at all of the schools. The other number I have here, which probably goes more to what you are saying -- 43 percent of the schools reported no incidents of crime at all. And that is 43 percent. I mean that is like nothing of any kind. And then, 90 percent reported no violent crimes.

I think people need to know their schools are safe and that principals and parents and teachers, students, communities, are all working to make them safer. I do not want people out there to feel like -- and you and I have talked a lot about this -- to feel like that this school is some unsafe place. I think you can almost say, in a community, which might be unsafe, the school is the safest place in that community. And we want people to understand that.

That does not mean you let your guard down. Because it means we ought to try harder to do something about any violence -- any violence. But I think it is important to realize that it is very abnormal for violence to occur in a school.

QUESTION: Madam Attorney General, the report today of your departing head of the Campaign Finance Task Force recommended an Independent Counsel in that matter. Are you considering it? What can you say about his recommendations to you?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We are reviewing the report now. As I have said from the beginning, I review all new information or conclusions or anything that is relevant to the issue of whether an Independent Counsel should be appointed and the statute triggered. And we will continue to do that.

QUESTION: Have you changed your opinion at all --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We are in the process of reviewing it, so we have not reached any conclusions.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, if your own prosecutor is challenging your decision and saying in fact that you may have misread the Independent Counsel Statute, how will you answer to Republicans, such as Senator Hatch, who last week challenged you strongly, and Senator Thompson, and others, on this?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: There are a range of lawyers within the Department who have had long experience with the Independent Counsel Act. And what we do is here from everybody, not just one lawyer, but everybody. And we make sure that we try to consider all arguments, and reach the best decisions, based on the history of the Act, the legislative history, and other factors. And that is what we will do in this situation.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, he is the guy you brought in to fix problems with the Campaign Finance Task Force -- he is your main man.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I indicated, in a matter such as this, you have the investigation underway, and 11 people have been indicted. We also have the Independent Counsel Act, which applies not just in this investigation, or may or may not, but applies in others, and has to be considered in other investigations.

There have been lawyers primarily responsible -- you used the expression "main lawyer." There is no main lawyer. There are lawyers responsible for different areas, and we want to consider everybody's point of view. We want to consider it in the most open way possible, so that they have an opportunity to express their views, so that we consider it.

One of the things I will tell you -- and just judging from you all, I look at the media interest represented around this table and I can tell you that you have a variety of interests, often opposed to each other -- I sit around this table on any number of issues in the Department of Justice and have some of the best lawyers in the country -- five over here and five over here -- and I may have 10 different opinions. It is my responsibility to listen to those people, to encourage vigorous discussion, to encourage disagreement if it exists, but to encourage it in a thoughtful way. And that is what we do.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, you suggest that Mr. LaBella is in a small minority with his recommendation, that other attorneys, you said, in the Department, with long experience with the law --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No, I do not suggest that they or anybody is in a minority with respect to Mr. LaBella's comments, because we are in the process of reviewing them and have not reached conclusions. I am trying --

QUESTION: Ms. Reno -- Ms. Reno --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Whoa, wait just a second.

I just want to make sure that we hear from everyone. Nobody is a minority in terms of coming to the ultimate right answer. And if one person out of 100 has the right answer, that is what I should do. We do not do things by majority vote; we do things based on the evidence and the law.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, as long as we are on this subject, is there anything new in Mr. LaBella's report? And, number two, do you plan to make any portions of the report public?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I cannot comment on Mr. LaBella's report. And I



want to do everything that I can to make sure that the investigation is conducted the right way, that I do nothing that will discourage others from coming forward, to give their views, to dissent, to openly discuss issues. And so, with those conditions in mind, I will try to do everything I can to be as open as I can.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, if Mr. LaBella -- if I can follow up -- but Mr. LaBella has made the conflict of interest argument before, the same as Director Freeh. Is there any evidence in this report or anything different that would cause you to change your mind about appointing an independent counsel?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of the points that I have made to earlier questions is that we are in the process of reviewing it. And I do not want to jump to conclusions. I want to make sure that I carefully review every aspect of it.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, can you give us any sense of the time frame of the review, how long this would take? Will it be a 30-day review? What is your sense of how long this will take?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We would like to finish the review as soon as possible.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, a couple of questions. Is it correct that you have had the report for a week?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I do not know the date I received it. It has been approximately 5 to 7 days.

QUESTION: But presumably, since you have kept in close touch with the Campaign Finance Task Force and have always said if they have any new evidence they should bring it to you immediately, presumably what this is is not so much a list of new evidence as more of a kind of global view of what it all means. Is that a fair characterization?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not characterize it. Because as I have said, I want to try to take steps to fully review it, to do nothing that would deter others from coming forward and being thoughtful. So I do not want to get into the comment of it -- of the substance of it.

QUESTION: And just one other, if I may. We have talked about Mr. LaBella's apparent conclusions, but is it fair to say there are other career lawyers in the Justice Department who take the opposite view?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, I have got a report. I want to do justice to that report. I do not want to jump to conclusions. I want to make sure that I hear from everybody concerned, and make the best judgment I can based on what is the right thing to do.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, you talk about the democratic process of people sitting around this table --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No. I indicated to you that it was not democratic. That if I have one person with the right answer, they may prevail.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, first of all, is there any 30-day reviews or preliminary inquiries regarding the campaign finance matter currently under way?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, I would not comment.

QUESTION: Certainly you have said repeatedly that in any instance that you receive specific and credible evidence that a covered person may have committed a crime you would immediately invoke the Act. In the past, you have invoked the Act, in one case I recall, within hours of having received such evidence on a fairly clear-cut matter. Can you tell us where that specific question sits, of the matter --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What specific question?

QUESTION: The question of specific and credible evidence that a covered person may have committed a crime in regard to the LaBella report. Has that question been answered in your review?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We are in the process of reviewing whether the Act is triggered. And that is a continuing process. And when I determine that it is triggered, I will trigger it.

QUESTION: But within that process, I'm just asking about this one part of it --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What part of it?

QUESTION: The part of that regards a finding of specific and credible evidence that a covered person may have committed a crime.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm sorry, I am not understanding your question.

QUESTION: Under the mandatory provisions of the Independent Counsel Act, as you have noted repeatedly --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Right.

QUESTION: -- you have said that if anybody brought, at any time, any prosecutor, and you had instructed them that as soon as they found anything that appeared to be specific and credible evidence that a covered person may have committed a crime, you would invoke the Act. What I am asking is, in the process of your review --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Of what?

QUESTION: Of LaBella's report --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have not completed my review.

QUESTION: Have you completed this part of it?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What part of it?

QUESTION: The part of it that regards findings of specific and credible evidence that a covered person may have committed a crime.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I do not understand your question in the sense of I cannot comment on the report. I cannot comment on what is in the report. All I can tell you is that I am reviewing it, and will make an appropriate judgment at the conclusion of the review.

QUESTION: General Reno, if you were to find that an independent counsel was held in contempt of court, would that be just cause for removing them from their position?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I do not do "what ifs."

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, may I go back to the drug conspiracy indictments out of Plano, Texas yesterday. Did main Justice have any input into that investigation, and is this a legal tactic you are going to use in other communities?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I cannot comment, because I want to make sure that whatever we say would not be in conflict with whatever the judge has ruled.

So I will ask Bert to give you whatever comment we can properly make.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- back to the report for a second. Does the fact that Mr. LaBella -- his report adopts a similar position as Director Freeh -- does that require you to do some rethinking in terms of the issue, in the sense that here you have, again, as my colleague said, a person who was brought in to do the review, to oversee the investigation, and the Director of the FBI adopting similar positions, does that create a different scenario, a different synergy in the deliberations?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have never understood what synergy in deliberations meant.

(Laughter.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But when the Director of the FBI gives me his opinion, it is very important for me. It is important that I review it. When a person who is responsible for a particular investigation gives me his opinion, or her opinion, it is very important for me. And it is important that I review it and carefully consider it. When the career lawyers in the Department give me their view, and they have had long experience in a matter, it is very important that I consider it and review it.

And then I have got to make the best decision I can.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, can I ask you about an extradition case? There is a local prosecutor out in Oregon, who wants to extradite a man suspected in a thrill killing out there. This suspect fled to Mexico. He is being held by Mexican authorities. Oregon may want to seek the death penalty. And once again we see another one of these showdowns with Mexico over the death penalty question.

What is the Justice Department doing, or what has the Department learned? How can you help these local prosecutors, who are in these showdowns with Mexico over extradition when the death penalty is in question?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: This reflects the understanding and the agreements between the Government of the United States and the Government of Mexico. There are countries that are opposed to the death penalty. And we have to work through these issues and make sure that local prosecutors understand the treaty obligations that exist, and that we do everything we can to see that these people are brought to just, and the most appropriate sentence, the firmest, fairest sentence available under the law is provided for.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, a follow-up. (Off microphone) -- talks with the Salvadoran Government about suspects of homicide who have fled there. And do you consider the option that in El Salvador and other Latin American countries they would capture and try these suspects there and agree to that? And how serious is the situation, since we are talking about Texas and D.C. and L.A. and other countries -- and the other States, where Latin American -- where serious criminals are detained?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What we are trying to do is to make sure that there is no safe place to hide, and that if somebody commits a murder here and flees back to their country, where they are a national of that country, that everybody will understand that a crime is best prosecuted where it was committed, where the witnesses are, where the community needs a sense of understanding that justice has been achieved.

And so we have worked with our colleagues in the hemisphere to try to make sure that we spread the word and that we see implemented policies that will permit the extradition of nationals. And we will continue to work with governments around the world to ensure that.

QUESTION: Speaking of a big crime and a big case about extradition of nationals, where do you stand on the possible change of venue of a Pan Am 103 trial to Holland, and especially the plan is to release these two suspects to the Organization of African Unity or possibly the Arab League? Shouldn't they be in the custody of people that can interrogate them?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I cannot comment on any proposal except to say that we have been asked to review it, and no final determinations have been made.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- Center for School Safety has said that there have been 25 school-related deaths thus far this year. There were 34 last year. There were 63 in 1993, which was the high-water year. Why are you waiting 5 years after the fact to start addressing this problem?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Are you talking about the problem of school violence?

QUESTION: Yes. And school-related deaths.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Actually, we have started much earlier. When I

testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in March of 1993, I said that the greatest single crime problem I felt that we faced in America was the problem of youth violence, both youth being killed and youth killing. Whether it be in the schools or a child sitting on their own front porch or playing in the streets, we need to protect our children. We have focused intensive efforts in that regard. And we have made sure that youth violence is a priority.

In most instances, the enforcement issues will be local in nature, and local prosecutors will be responsible. But wherever we can work with them, we want to do so. Through our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, we have done much in terms of developing mentoring programs, prevention programs, intervention programs, that are having an effect.

This is one of the single great problems we face, because the number of young people in the age category 12 to 18 is going up and will continue to go up for another 5 to 10 years. We have made progress, in that violence amongst youth is going down. But we cannot rest on our laurels.

QUESTION: But, Ms. Reno -- (off microphone) -- as an inner city problem. I did not see you and Mr. Riley here unveiling slick videos with these magnificent campaigns -- (off microphone) -- the problem.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What you saw was oftentimes a number of us sitting here. And I think you were probably not here on the days when your colleagues looked at me like, would she please get off this youth violence kick, because she's talked too long about it. I think if you consulted with your colleagues, they would tell you, and if you would look at the transcripts, this has been a regular subject of real concern for some time.

But it is not sitting around a table, talking about it, it is acting on it, too. And I think we are seeing results, in that for the first time youth homicides are going down and the rate of youth violence is going down.

So it is something that I can tell you is -- was to me, when I saw it and when I testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, it is an inner city problem, it is a rural problem, it is a problem that affects all America, not one segment of it. And as long as one youth is in danger or at risk, we as a Nation should be mobilized in that fashion.

People ask me, what can I do? They should know where they can go and what they can do to make a difference.

Are you a mentor? Try mentoring. It will make a difference. Go to the public schools. Talk about the media. Talk about what you do. Give young people an opportunity to have a positive future. Engage in conflict resolution programs. Work and learn in your community. There is so much that we can do to make a difference.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, on extradition, has there been any progress on the extradition of Mr. Rick Mersier from the United States to Mexico? And my second question is, suspected Mexican money of drug traffickers' accounts has been frozen in four different banks in the United States. Do you have any comments on that, please?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No, I do not. I cannot comment on either aspect of your question.

QUESTION: Thank you.

SECRETARY RILEY: Let me comment. Can I respond?

Janet, can I respond to that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Yes.

SECRETARY RILEY: Let me say that I think it is a very good question and one that has been raised.

If you look back at where we were when we first got here, and look at the things that we emphasized -- high standards in school, for all children, careful attention to disabled children, high standards for disabled children, the after school programs, the engagement of young people in their education, parent involvement. The Parent Involvement Partnership, we had 40 organizations in it when we first started it. Now we have over 4,000 -- practically all the churches and synagogues and all the business and education groups and so forth.

So I think if you look back, those things that connect up young children with school, connect parents with school and with children, we have worked diligently on those things ever since we have been here. But I think your question is very good, and we need to be concerned about all children all the time.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- if this is affecting the suburbs and rural America --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that is one of the worst things that you can say. You have no sense of some of the communities in America that are working together. To say that something like this is sexy is just demeaning. It is a tremendous effort that has got to continue and to be enhanced. For any child in America to be killed, wherever they are killed, is just plain wrong.

And when did you first start coming to these meetings?

QUESTION: Well, about 2 months ago.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Okay, that explains it then.

QUESTION: You know, we did not have Congress, and we did not have Mr. Riley and people coming up here, talking about this when this was strictly limited to the inner cities. And that is a fact.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Okay. I think we have understood the problem now. You just started attending these press availabilities about 2 months ago. I would invite you to spend some time at the Department of Justice, hear what we have been trying to do, not just in the inner cities, but around America. And let us transform your concerns into some articles that tell the American people what we can do in the inner cities, in a rural area where a child is killed, in anyplace in America, to protect our children.

I will ask Bert to get in touch with you. We will follow up with you. And we will turn this into a positive experience.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Yes, and then --

QUESTION: Have you decided what you are going to do about a new look into the death of Dr. Martin Luther King? And if you have not decided, why haven't you decided?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have not decided because I am trying to make the best decision that I can. And I want to review the history. There is extensive history in this, and I want to make sure that I make the right decision.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, we understand that there is a problem in the appropriations process, with the funding of gun checks. How serious a problem are we looking at here?



ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that it is imperative that the FBI be permitted to charge a fee for gun checks, to make the Brady law work, and we are going to try to do everything we can to make sure that the FBI has the authority to do that.

Thank you very much.

VOICE: Happy Birthday, Ms. Reno.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Mr. Riley, thank you very much.

SECRETARY RILEY: Sure, thank you very much.

(Whereupon, at 10:15 a.m., the press conference was concluded.)