



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Press Conference

THE HONORABLE JANET RENO, ATTORNEY GENERAL

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9:30 a.m.

P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:30 a.m.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of our top priorities has been our effort to fight violence by keeping guns out of the wrong hands. Since President Clinton signed the Brady law in 1993, background checks have prevented almost a quarter of a million over-the-counter gun sales to felons, fugitives, persons under domestic violence restraining orders, and others prohibited by law from possessing a firearm.

This morning, we are taking another step. Today, a new regulation will officially certify that the FBI's National Instant Check System, or NICS, as we call it, will be up and running on November 30, 1998, this year, the deadline set by law.

NICS is a computerized network, designed to access criminal histories and other records, to ensure that prospective purchasers are not prohibited from buying handguns, rifles and shotguns. NICS will be ready because of a partnership between the Federal and State governments. We have provided more than \$200 million to assist State governments in improving their criminal history records.

This is important, in that if someone is arrested and we don't have the criminal history immediately available or complete, it may involve a dangerous offender going free because we do not have the criminal history. That, in itself, has been important.

Under the National Instant Check System, a prospective gun buyer will fill out a form right there in the gun shop. The dealer will then place a phone call. And an instant check will be run on the computerized network. When records are unclear and follow-up inquiries are required, the law provides that we can delay a transfer for up to three days. In the vast majority of the cases, however, the sale will be approved or denied within minutes.

As part of our partnership with the States, as of today, 27 States have agreed to conduct at least some of the Brady law's background checks under NICS. These States have made, I think, an excellent choice. When States perform the checks, they have access to more State records than the FBI, and are more familiar with their own records and State statutes that may also prohibit gun sales.

For example, many restraining orders and mental health records are kept locally and will not be accessible to the FBI. At the request of Congress, we are developing new proposals to encourage even more States to conduct the Brady law's checks. In States that have not agreed to conduct the NICS checks, the FBI will check criminal history and other records using the National Instant Check System.

Creating a National Instant Check System has been a great challenge. Although it has not been easy, we are on schedule. The full benefits of the National Instant Check System will not be felt until Federal and State criminal history records are complete. But NICS is going to make a difference on day one, and will help protect Americans from gun violence.

This milestone is just one more step forward in a larger quest to effectively confront the culture of violence in

this country. We need to work together, as police and prosecutors, as citizens and shopkeepers, to keep guns out of the wrong hands, while minimizing the burdens on law-abiding gun buyers. The National Instant Check System will help us achieve this goal.

With me is David Lesh, the Deputy Assistant Director of the CGIS Division of the FBI, and we will both be happy to try to answer any questions.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno or Mr. Lesh, December is peak gun sales month because of Christmas; how will this new system be able to bear up to this huge surge in gun sales?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, I can tell you that Mr. Lesh, the Deputy Director of the FBI, and I have been talking about that, and are very aware of that timing. And I think the FBI will be prepared.

MR. LESH: Yes, we will definitely be prepared. We have actually -- the system is sized, of course, for the full load of what it is going to take to do this by the month. It is difficult, obviously, to bring up a system on the biggest month of the year -- obviously. We would have preferred to have it some other time, obviously. But we have geared up with enough people -- about 513 people -- and we are about 98 percent trained already on that.

So everything is right on schedule right now. We know that we will be ready and running at that time and be able to handle it.

QUESTION: You are worried about it then?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Of course, we are worried about it, sure. You know, we would be crazy if we weren't, I think.

QUESTION: What's the difference between the sales between regular times and Christmas?

MR. LESH: The regular time -- it scales off. The big months are -- there are about 12.4 million firearms sold a year,

not counting a couple of million for pawned guns, which also fall into this. And the big months, obviously, are December, November and October. Those are the big months. I mean I do not have the exact numbers, but this is a very large month. The three weeks just before Christmas are very large.

QUESTION: Mr. Lesh, do you know -- or have you come up with a figure of basically how much it costs -- it is going to cost the government per background check? And how is this cost going to be taken care of? And my recollection here is a little fuzzy; it seems like Congress took some step that basically prevents you from passing the cost along to the consumer.

MR. LESH: Yes, they did. We were going to do this with a user fee. And we had originally published the user fee in the neighborhood of around \$13. But we had it down to about \$10 a check. And now, the Congress has funded us for the first year of this right now. So that's how it's going to be handled, is through direct funding for the first year.

QUESTION: What is the difference, Mr. Lesh, between the criminal histories of the States, the 27 States up there, and those that don't that you're going to do, what's the difference between the quality or the comprehensiveness of the criminal histories?

MR. LESH: Well, they are in varying stages. The Justice Department, I know, has done a lot of work in cleaning up those records, working with the States to clean those records up. And they are shared records. I mean they don't belong to the FBI. The records we use in the III, the Identification Index, the Interstate Identification Index, there is about right now -- in fact, I had just looked before I came over; I was thinking that something like that may come up -- we have got 29 million subject records right now in the III. And that is one of the systems that is checked when you do a mixed check.

And we also check an NCIC. And at NCIC we've got 477,000 warrants, people that are wanted, in there, and 109,000

protection orders. So those are being checked, those systems are being checked.

Where we'll probably have a little bit of difficulty would be if we get a hit on one of those and there is no disposition in the system. But 80 percent of the time, like the Attorney General just mentioned, 80 to 85 percent of the time, it is just going to fly away right through, within minutes. The person will -- there will be no record and they'll walk out with their firearm. And then there will be another small -- the other times we'll get a hit, and we figure we will have that resolved probably within the hour, or even less than that, because we will have our people back at headquarters that really know what to look for in a record.

There will be a very small number of records where we will not be able to maybe get a disposition right away. It will take us three days to get it.

QUESTION: Is it also true that this will include long guns, as well as handguns?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's correct.

QUESTION: Are you worried about any kind of opposition from the NRA? Are they fully on board with --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think everybody wants to make sure that people who do not -- cannot legally possess a weapon should not have that weapon, regardless of what that weapon is.

QUESTION: Is it a problem on the instant check, if it comes up that somebody is a fugitive or there's some kind of warrant -- criminal -- for them -- the gun shop doesn't call the police?

MR. LESH: There's checks and balances in the system. Obviously, as soon as you get a hit, we've worked out -- of course, the States that are doing this, it's much easier -- this is another reason why we'd like the States to handle

this, because it's in their area, they would be able to get a hold of the local police department and get that person picked up, maybe hold on to that person there. We're not asking anybody to put themselves in jeopardy, obviously.

We're just going -- there will be a denial for the sale of that thing, and there are provisions within our operating procedures, whereby the operators that pick this up in the FBI have contact numbers in each State as to who to call on these things to take care of these kinds of instances where we can get somebody out there.

QUESTION: Can I just ask you a little more about that. If we can walk through the mechanics here. I walk into the gun store. I fill out this form, give it to the gun shop. They pick up the telephone and dial a toll-free number?

MR. LESH: Yes.

QUESTION: And if they're in one of the 27 States, do they call some number in the State?

MR. LESH: Yes. Every State has a point of contact. And there is only one point of contact for gun checks. And then, if that State is not being a point of contact for us, then they call a toll-free number. And that number goes to a telephone center. We have two telephone centers that we have contracted out.

And basically, the data, the individual, the firearms dealer, just gives -- he has a code number, and he gives that number, and that's verified. And then they just plug in the name and the identifying data -- social security number, a date of birth, whatever he gets. They'll need a couple forms of identification.

Then it's really invisible to the people back in the telephone center. They're just going to key this information into the system. And all they're going to get is "no record" -- they're going to get a "proceed with the sale." They never see any data because they're not FBI employees. So they don't see a name. They don't see a

record or anything. All they do is say "proceed." And then they tell the dealer, and he sells them the gun.

In a case where there's a record, it'll automatically bounce to the FBI center in the CGIS Division out in West Virginia. And that's where we've got legal examiners. And they're the people, then, that will have to pull the data up and look at the record and decide whether that's a disqualifying record or not.

QUESTION: Meanwhile, back at the gun store, if it's a simple matter of no record, then I'm on the phone for a matter of what, a minute or so probably?

MR. LESH: A minute, yes. Probably a minute at the max.

QUESTION: I'm on hold? Am I on hold with them?

MR. LESH: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. But then, if it's bounced to the FBI center and they have to check this out, do they call me back --

MR. LESH: Yes, we will call you back. We have three days to call you back with a decision, by law.

QUESTION: At what point does the gun dealer say to the owner, you know, I think this is going to take a while, why don't you come back? How do they know how long it's going to take?

MR. LESH: They don't. I mean at this point, we're figuring that in most cases, probably 90-some-odd percent -- you know, that other 15 percent or so that you're going to have a problem on, we believe that in those cases we'll be able to resolve those really within minutes, basically, once we look at the record. We've got enough people and we've been to enough States and watched the way the States do this to know what it's going to take to do this.

They're going to be a few times there where it's going to take a little longer. And that's going to be a problem. As

we work through this thing, there's probably going to be a lot of angry people in some of these stores at times, you know.

QUESTION: There is no provision right now, no way to tell the dealer, who would in turn tell the prospective buyer, we're not going to have a quick answer, as a matter of fact, it could take a couple of days, there's no way to know that?

MR. LESH: Within a couple of minutes we'll be able to probably tell that, though.

QUESTION: The telephone center will say -- I mean won't leave them on hold for the three days -- will say, we're not going to get a record?

MR. LESH: The telephone center, really, they only handle the ones where there is no record. And those are within seconds, you know. I mean those are done very quickly.

If there's a record, it gets bounced to the FBI, to a bunch of legal analysts. And we've broken the country down by States, okay, because there are so many different laws and rules in every State. So we've got teams of people that are legal-type of examiners. They know the laws of each of those particular States, and they've got teams. And they will then look over this record and make a determination.

But it's probably going to be where you're going to probably, in some cases, be telling that person, it's going to take a while, you know, come back in a couple of hours or come back --

QUESTION: Who is the one who tells him that -- he's called and he's waiting on hold, who is the one who says --

MR. LESH: That will be an FBI examiner in the FBI complex out in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

QUESTION: The list of disqualifying -- the reason why a person could be rejected, and how are you dealing with, for

example, the issue of mental health records, mental illness records that different States might have?

MR. LESH: That is a disqualifying -- that is -- one of the disqualifiers is that. And that's one of the reasons why it's so important for the State to be the POC's on it. Because those are going to be some of the records that we won't necessarily have within the system. The States that are doing that will have that. And we also, in our NICS database, we have some of that data from like the Department of Veterans Affairs, okay. We've got records from them on people that have been adjudicated or, you know, legally disqualified mentally.

QUESTION: In all of States, do you need some kind of photo I.D. before you buy a firearm?

MR. LESH: Yes. And that is on the -- that is -- the onus on that is on the FFL, you know, the Federal firearms dealer, is to take and have some kind of identification and accept that identification. And those are ATF, basically, regulations that tell them, firearms dealers, exactly what they need.

QUESTION: Sir, do you expect this coming November to be a huge gun sale month, before it goes into effect?

MR. LESH: Well, I'll tell you, there was an ad in the West Virginia newspaper that somebody showed me just yesterday, a big ad in the paper: Buy your guns before the NICS. So yes, probably so.

QUESTION: Are you prepared for the complaints you're going to get? You're going to change the way Americans buy their beloved firearms. And as reasonable as this is, as needed as it is, you're going to get a ton of complaints.

MR. LESH: And we realize that.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think it's important, as we put this system into effect -- the deadline has been set by Congress -- and we want to all work together to make sure

that it's implemented as smoothly as possible. The law provides for three days. We will try to reach conclusion on these matters as quickly as possible.

But it is a real and effective means of keeping guns out of the hands of people who should not have them under the law. And I do not think anybody disagrees with that end result. I think we need to work together to minimize the complaints, to make it as easy as possible for law-abiding people to have weapons and have them when they want them. But I think we need to work together to keep them out of the hands of people who should not have them.

QUESTION: Could we go to the issue of Dr. Slepian, the --

QUESTION: Before you do that -- the administration, for a long time -- many people who supported the Brady law said the records check was one benefit; the other was the five-day inherent cooling-off period, which you lose now as the Brady law expires and we shift to this new system. Is there any thought being given to asking Congress to reconsider this issue of the five-day waiting period?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think what we are trying to do right now is to make sure that this law is implemented as smoothly as possible, and then address other issues as they come down the line.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, despite the improvement of the system -- I take it there's still no way to prevent a repeat of the incident with Russell Weston where he went to Minnesota and his mental history was not reflected? You haven't been able to fix that yet?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As we have pointed out, one of the advantages of the State providing the point of contact is that they will have access to State mental health records and will have a better understanding of those records. And so that's one very clear advantage in the State doing it.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, on a slight tangent. What, if anything, will this do in connection with sales at gun shows? And

what is your take on efforts to close that loophole especially with the one going on in your home State?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think these are issues that we will be addressing.

QUESTION: Just to follow up, this would not come into play in a gun show sale, I assume?

MR. LESH: Oh, yes. The gun show sales, that's part of the problem, sure. But they come under the same bill. And they'll have to do the same thing out there.

QUESTION: Gun shows should involve the same instant check?

MR. LESH: Yes. Pawn shops also, yes, when they redeem the weapon.

QUESTION: Have there been any dry runs on this? I mean you've got this huge sales period coming up.

MR. LESH: Yes. Yes, we have been -- obviously, we've been practicing with some of the other States, and sharing databases. And of course, here very shortly we'll be up for about, you know, close to a month testing this with a couple of States full-time, too, beforehand.

QUESTION: What states were they?

MR. LESH: Well, we've been working with West Virginia and we've been testing with a lot of the States. I do not want to say one that we may not be testing with, but I know we've been doing it with West Virginia for sure.

QUESTION: Mr. Lesh, in 1996, President Clinton proposed and Congress passed the expansion of the disqualified categories, to include people with violent misdemeanors and some other things wrapped in there. There was, and it is my understanding there still is, some problem in certain States figuring out exactly what fits into that category. Is that still something you're wrestling with?

MR. LESH: Well, on this particular law, the only misdemeanor that's involved in this would be the -- any kind of conviction for domestic violence.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But that is the issue. And I'll ask -- what is a domestic violence case, how do you identify it -- I'll ask Bert to give you the specifics on what we have been able to develop.

QUESTION: Hasn't that been challenged in court? Isn't there a stay on that right now?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's why I'm asking Bert to give you the specifics.

QUESTION: On another issue --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'll just make sure you have time; don't worry.

QUESTION: What percentage of criminal records do you estimate will be available to the system at start-up nationally?

MR. LESH: I think we've got a pretty good start on the system. You heard the Attorney General earlier. I mean there's been a tremendous amount of work done with these III States. I mean I think you heard the size of the database already.

We've still got work to do. But I do not have any way of estimating what percentage of that we're going to do. I mean everything that every State has entered into NCIC is in there. And everything that the States have put in the III -- and you heard that, that was 29 million records -- are in there. We're going -- I mean, a couple of months ago, we had 50,000 protection orders in there; now we've got 109,000 protection orders in there.

So those are building, and the database will continue to build as we work with the States. And we're doing a lot

with the States to really help them upgrade their record systems, okay. And we're doing the same thing in the FBI, with teams of individuals. And we plan on doing that with the NICS people. This is going to really assist us also in updating our disposition information on our particular files, Because we'll be cleaning things up. As we get ones that don't have a disposition and we call out to that State, we'll be able to fix that.

And the idea is, when we have down time here with the NICS work, we plan on putting teams of these people together and using them, going through the States, to work with the States to really help them bring their records up to date, too. That's one of the goals we have in all of this

QUESTION: But isn't there a huge discrepancy in how States have a lot of records in and some don't?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That is the case. It has certainly been improved by the national criminal history funding that has been made available. But it is so important for States to realize how important it is to get those records as complete as possible.

As I mentioned earlier, if you have somebody who is arrested for a relatively minor crime, they might be expected to be released almost immediately. But if they are wanted, for example, or if they have a history of a very serious crime and very immediate release from prison, they may not be released. And so the community security is really tied up in ensuring that we have accurate records and up-to-date and complete records.

At the same time, it is important that we have an accurate record of the cases dismissed, because the person was determined not to be guilty of the crime. That should be clearly available.

So I think it's in everybody's best interest to make sure that these records are as complete and accurate as possible.

QUESTION: Say the system worked perfectly for one year and

two months. On New Year's Eve 1999, you've got a patchwork, I believe, of hardware systems put together on this thing. Are you going to have a year 2000 bug problem?

(Laughter.)

MR. LESH: No.

QUESTION: What is the penalty for gun shop owners who don't cooperate?

MR. LESH: It's an ATF regulation. But obviously there is a \$10,000 fine, I know, and there is also they can lose their license. But obviously that would be referred to the ATF.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'll ask Bert to work with the ATF to get you the absolutely accurate information on that.

QUESTION: Is there a concern here that this will place some gun dealers in -- following up on an earlier question -- in some jeopardy? And what safeguards are being taken? You know, I can picture some of these people coming in to purchase a weapon, they are told there is going to be a hold, they have a somewhat lower than usual temper level. You know, I can see the situations where it would be really dangerous for a gun dealer.

Has that been taken into consideration?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think anybody that deals in guns, I would assume, has taken sensible precautions with respect to people who might be short tempered.

MR. LESH: The same answer.

QUESTION: Mr. Lesh, are there some side benefits to the system that you've created out there in West Virginia? In other words, presuming that the database that you have created there, not only can the phone banks tie into this for gun purchases, but this will be the center at which the police officer who calls in for the identification check on the road, it could be run through there and that sort of

thing, or is this strictly for the gun sales?

MR. LESH: This system is strictly for gun sales. I mean the police officer already has a system, the National Crime Information System, for doing the things you just mentioned. We're just using a portion of that particular system. But we've already got a system for that, as we do for our fingerprint system, the Integrated Automated Fingerprint System.

QUESTION: You mentioned earlier that Congress has appropriated the money. How much is it expected to cost to run this program for the first year?

MR. LESH: We figured around \$42 million.

QUESTION: How can that be if there are 12 and a half million gun sales a year and you had figured earlier it would cost \$10 per gun sale. I would think that would be 120 million.

MR. LESH: Well, for one thing, we've taken off the number of people, as part of that appropriation, which would have been a large number of people. But the savings that we're getting on the Integrated Automated Fingerprint System -- we've got these people on board already -- and what we're doing is shifting them into this new function. So that has been a large part of the savings right there.

QUESTION: This doesn't count the State costs, does it; that's your costs?

MR. LESH: Yes, that's just the FBI. And if the States do this, we don't charge anything for that. They are their records; we are just maintaining their records.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But the State can still -- if the State is the point of contact, as I understand it, the State can still charge a fee.

MR. LESH: Yes. And they do.

QUESTION: From the applicant? The State would charge the applicant a fee?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It will depend on the State law and how it's done.

QUESTION: Isn't there the hope that you'll pick up people --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Now you're the one that wants to ask the new question --

QUESTION: Well, I'm going to relate it to my topic of interest.

Dr. Slepian -- the shooters, madmen, assassins, like who killed Dr. Slepian, isn't there the hope that you'll pick up in the computer checks people like this, that have some mental instability or criminal record or et cetera?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I do not think it's appropriate to comment on what we might expect with respect to this matter, other than to say that the FBI and the U.S. Attorneys Office are pursuing it.

QUESTION: And let me go on to ask this. You met, Ms. Reno, with Gloria Felt, with Planned Parenthood. What vigorous and coordinated work to stem violence at abortion facilities might the Justice Department be taking?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I indicated, we are pursuing this tragedy, and just a horrible tragedy, when you hear all the circumstances and hear from people who -- children he brought into this world. We are pursuing that. But we want to look at the whole picture and make sure that we pursue every appropriate lead. And we will be working to ensure that, both with respect to the Marshals Service, the FBI, the U.S. Attorneys, and working in partnership with State and local governments.

QUESTION: Are you specifically asking that nonviolent Prolife, the large majority in Prolife, help the Federal Government in discerning who this particular shooter might

be?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think it is so important. Because it has been gratifying for me to hear from Pro-life advocates who say whoever did this did a terrible wrong. And it is important for everyone, no matter what their position, to come forward and say we cannot tolerate violence as a manner of expression.

QUESTION: Since Congress failed to pass juvenile violence litigation, will there be a need in the next Congress to push for something? Or is there enough progress being made?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I said last week, I think that there has been real progress that has been made in the appropriations bill. There is \$95 million appropriated for programs for children at risk. This money will go to the States through a formula. The States will be able to distribute the money to local programs and to State programs that can truly make a difference.

This past Tuesday, I was in Denver, and had the opportunity to visit a school at which the United Way and others, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, were sponsoring and encouraging a tutoring program. I talked to these first- and second-graders, and started asking them what the tutor meant to them. Now, you can prepare children for answers, but you couldn't prepare these children for the smiles on their faces. They started talking about what, an hour and a half on a Tuesday night, at 6 o'clock at night, what a difference that makes for them.

And I said, what do your tutors do? And they said, some of them read to us our favorite books or books that are a little bit too difficult for us. But they said what's most important is that they spend time with us, and it's just me they spend time with. And it's the one-on-one. And then, one little boy said, they help me with my math. And I suspect that there are a number of us around the table who would have appreciated somebody in the first and second grade who spent an hour and a half with us a week, helping us with our math -- us and only us.

There was a parent there. And I asked her -- she was obviously a very caring parent -- and she said, I have four children, and that tutor gives me time to spend more time with my other children.

Whether it be money, whether it be people volunteering, such as the volunteers for Big Brothers and Big Sisters, I just see a groundswell across this Nation of recognition that communities, working with the State and Federal Government, working with the State community, working with the private sector, are putting together frameworks around our children that give them a real chance. And these are children not just in low-income areas, it's not just one group, it's all children, including children of parents who work and have everything they seem to need. But what children need is time with adults.

So I think we have made a lot of progress. And I think what we'll do in this year is look at where we are, work with Congress, and see what more we can do to give children a solid foundation.

QUESTION: The State Department is referring all questions regarding the Pinochet in England to the Justice Department, and the Justice Department is referring them to you, so that's why I am here today. I guess I have two questions. The Spanish judge in the case has requested that the classified documents that were acquired during the Letelier-Moffitt investigation and in other ways be handed over to him so that he can use it in building the case against Mr. Pinochet. That's my first question.

The second question is --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What is the question?

QUESTION: Oh, I'm sorry. The question is, what is the status of that request? Are you considering it? And will you respond positively?

The second question regards the Letelier, Moffitt and Karpen families. They say, or their lawyers, have submitted

a letter to you and to Secretary Albright last Friday, asking for a meeting in which they would discuss, first, the Spanish request, and also the possibility of indicting Pinochet in connection to the Letelier-Moffitt killings in 1976.

And I wonder whether you intend to meet with the families and whether, in the last week or two weeks, since Mr. Pinochet was arrested, you have considered a possible indictment in the case?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have not received the letter from the families, so it would be premature to comment. But I will ask Bert to make any appropriate comment as soon as we have identified the letter as here.

Secondly, with respect to the first question, we have been, previous to this and will continue, to provide the Spanish authorities with whatever information we possibly can under the mutual legal assistance treaty that we have with Spain.

QUESTION: The point is this point was also raised by 36 members of the House, in a letter to President Clinton. They say that there is class -- that thus far, the only material that has been supplied to the Spanish judge in the case, or the two judges in the case, have been public documents. Whereas they say that they are aware -- both the families and the Spanish judge and the 36 Congressmen -- of classified materials which bear directly upon General Pinochet's involvement in supervising the secret police under Chile, which was ultimately responsible for the Letelier-Moffitt killings, and Operation Condor in the Southern Cone of Latin America, by which political dissidents were disposed in various countries in various ways.

And so he is seeking classified information. Are you considering that request for classified information, as opposed to public information?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: My understanding from the people that are handling this is that we are providing the Spanish

authorities with all the information that we can. I will ask Bert to clarify that for you in any way that he can publicly.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, has the Pardon Attorney begun a process of reviewing Jonathan Pollard's sentence?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm discussing the matter with the White House counsel, and we will work out a process for reviewing the matter.

QUESTION: Does that mean you don't necessarily plan on going through with a normal Pardon Attorney process?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm discussing the matter with the White House now.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Can you speak just a little bit louder?

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, could we review our weekly check on the OPR investigation into Mr. Starr's office?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I am still awaiting a recommendation as to how to proceed.

QUESTION: From OPR?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's correct.

QUESTION: This is a related matter. It's been reported now, the latest disclosures about Mr. Starr's office, was that, among other things, he's paying attorneys and consultants as much as \$400 an hour. I do not know of any government attorneys who receive that. I wonder if that concerns you

at all or whether you're going to be looking into that as well?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on the course of the review.

QUESTION: (Off microphone)--

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: How is this letter from Toni Morrison, E.L. Doctorow and Gail Zappa and others affected a decision on whether or not to investigate Ken Starr?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Which letter?

QUESTION: They apparently sent you a letter, dated today?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have not received it if it's dated today.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: You've now got even more requests piled up on your desk from members of Congress in addition to David Kendall, asking that you release the materials which Starr first brought to you when he asked for the Lewinsky expansion. Where are you on that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We're still reviewing that.

QUESTION: Ms. Reno, just real quickly, to clarify what Ron asked. You said you're still awaiting a recommendation from OPR on how to proceed. Does that mean that OPR is in a review process?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Yes.

QUESTION: So the review of these complaints has begun?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That's what I indicated last week.

QUESTION: Is the Justice Department involved in reviewing the Executive Order 12333, which has to do with assassinations by American -- by government people? Is there anything that you're doing in Justice about whether -- what is self-defense and what is murder?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would refer all issues with respect to that to the National Security Council.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Speak a little bit louder.

QUESTION: Next week, a case comes up before the Supreme Court on -- (off microphone) -- associated with the -- (off microphone). (Off microphone) -- I just want to get your views on -- (off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I will always defer to Mr. Waxman and the Court on matters such as that.

Thank you.

VOICE: Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, at 10:08 a.m., the press conference concluded.)