



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE JANET RENO,
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(2:25 p.m.)

MR. BROMWICH: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am Michael Bromwich. And it is my honor and privilege to serve as the Inspector General for the Department of Justice. I want to welcome everybody here: OIG personnel, employees of other department components, congressional staff, other Inspectors General, and, most notably, former OIG employees, some of them pioneers who started this organization.

I want to thank members of the Justice Department leadership and component heads for being here. As you can see, Attorney General Janet Reno is here. Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder was scheduled to be here, but unfortunately he is ill and will not be able to make it.

I am delighted that over the course of the last 10 years that we have developed a really very professional and productive relationship with the leadership of this Department and with Department of Justice management generally. And before I say anything further, I would like to turn to Attorney General Janet Reno, to tell her that we are delighted by her presence, and ask her if she would care to make any remarks.

Attorney General Reno.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much. I am very proud to be here today to salute you who were here and some who are still here, who have made this office the effective force that it is today. This is now 10 years since the Office of Inspector General opened its doors for business. I commend you for all that you have done for the processes, the reputation, the efforts that you have developed to make this Department an effective, responsive agency of government.

During my six years as Attorney General, I have come to appreciate the fact that a vigorous Office of Inspector General is an investment, a darn good investment, against corruption, misconduct, waste, fraud, and abuse, an investment in effective government, an investment that has proven cost-effective across the government for the past 20 years, and certainly, within this Department, for the last decade.

When Congress established the system of Inspectors General in the Federal Government, it created a tripartite system of oversight that involves the agency itself, congressional committees and the Inspector General. I believe this system of checks and balances has worked well to provide meaningful oversight of this Department's activities. Public confidence is critical as we look toward the challenges facing the Department in the 21st century.

The OIG is in a unique position, given its independence, its experience and its integrity, to provide a high level of public accountability needed in law enforcement oversight bodies. The management oversight and the investigative work that you do is vital to this Department. I have seen it in action. Sometimes it is a criminal investigation, producing results, producing convictions. Sometimes it is an effective review of performance that rather than criticize and tear down, it builds up and gives people an idea of how they can do something better to serve the people of this country.

The people in this Department are some of the finest people I know, and whatever we can do to root out those that would pull the Department down and encourage those that want to try to best those efforts can make such a difference. And I thank you for your contribution. I salute you all for your dedication, your dependability and your success in fulfilling your mission.

To all of you, I say what I have said before, I feel particularly blessed and very proud to work with so many dedicated men and women, dedicated to serving their country, dedicated to trying to make people understand that democracy can

work. In these past six years, as each year has gone by, I have had one minister of justice or a minister of interior or an attorney general, and now, more recently, prime ministers and presidents come to that conference room in the Attorney General's office.

I marvel at them, because they come from new and developing democracies or they come from democracies that have plunged themselves into dictatorships and are now returning to the democratic fold. And what you realize more than ever is that democracy is very, very fragile. And sometimes you take three steps forward and four steps back. And you wonder how that small country, hanging on by a hope and a prayer, can survive.

Democracy is too often taken for granted in this country. You all help remind us of the people we serve, and our deep and abiding responsibility for serving them effectively, with honor, integrity and true service.

Thank you for all your great work.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m., the remarks of the Attorney General concluded.)