



**WEEKLY MEDIA AVAILABILITY WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
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ATTY GEN. RENO: I am very, very troubled by the information I received this week suggesting that pyrotechnic devices may have been used in the early morning hours on April the 19th, 1993, at Waco. At this time, all available indications are that the devices were not directed at the main wooden compound, were discharged several hours before the fire started, and were not the cause of the fire. Nonetheless, it is absolutely critical that we do

everything humanly possible to learn all the facts as accurately as possible and make them available to the public and Congress.

Prior to April the 19th, I received assurances that the gas and its means of use were not pyrotechnic. Since then, I have consistently been told that no pyrotechnic devices were used. I will continue to pursue this matter to get to the truth.

That is why Director Freeh and I have ordered a full review of all the facts concerning this matter. I intend the results of the review to be made public, and I will not stop till I get to the bottom of this.

Q Who's going to do this review?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'm in conversation with the director and will be with him today to make a determination.

Q Should it be someone outside of the FBI, do you think?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We'll talk about it today.

Q Do you personally believe that this was an error if indeed such pyrotechnic devices were used, to whether they started the fire or not? Was that an error -- (inaudible)?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't want to speculate any further. I want to pursue it to get to the bottom and then make the facts available to everybody.

Q Do you feel you have been misled, hung out to dry? (Laughs.) (Laughter.) I mean, you have been out there for six years, stating adamantly that those devices were never used.

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think --

Q Aren't you angry?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am very, very frustrated.

But in something like this, you have got to constantly pursue every issue and not give up, and not get frustrated until you get to the bottom line, which is the truth.

Q Ms. Reno, many Americans won't see this as an act of omission. What does this do to your credibility and that of the department?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't think it's very good for my credibility. That's the reason I am going to pursue it until I get to the truth.

Q What about other reports that the military Delta Force may have been involved in one way or another? Will you make an inquiry into that, as well?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will pursue any issue that is in question.

Q Why are still issues in question six years after this event?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I think that people look, go back over the evidence, review all the evidence. And one of the things that I have discovered -- if you had an event that took place here in the middle of the table, and all of you active reporters around the table, I'd get probably -- (counts the reporters around the table) -- I'd get about 11 different versions of it. The important thing is to keep going till you get the truth.

Q But in this case, the whole Waco incident has been so heavily scrutinized by everyone, how could a simple fact like this have slipped through?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am going to find out.

Q A member of Congress has already called for congressional hearings on this to see whether there was some false testimony given at the Waco hearings. Do you think that congressional hearings would be appropriate or necessary in

this case?

ATTY GEN. RENO: As I have always said with respect to congressional oversight, I welcome it, and I'll be happy to cooperate in every way that I can.

Q Ms. Reno, there are surveillance tapes of people talking inside the compound. Have the transcripts of those tapes, or the actual tapes, ever been released?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know whether they have been released or not in terms of public release, but I will have Myron check and let you know.

Q Would you consider releasing those tapes since they are pretty key evidence of who started the fire?

ATTY GEN. RENO: What we need to do is cooperate with the Texas Rangers, to do nothing that would interfere with whatever inquiry that they are undertaking, and do it in an orderly way; and then consistent with the pending civil litigation, make everything available that can be made available.

Q You've always said that no law enforcement official fired a shot that day. Can you still categorically deny that any law enforcement official fired shots?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I don't have any information that indicates that they did. We received information and concerns by a -- somebody related, or who had prepared a film or analyzed a film. Representatives of the department and representatives of the FBI went over it in detail and concluded that there was no basis for suggesting that shots had been fired. If there is any evidence, as I said three weeks ago, I want to review it and pursue it and not engage in speculation, but pursue it till we get to the bottom of it.

Q That will be part of this review, as well?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Any of the instances, any of the questions

raised, we will pursue.

Q Ms. Reno, given that this information has been, obviously, out there now for six years, how can you and the FBI be so confident that this pyrotechnic device had nothing to do with starting the fire?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We don't see any basis for it, based on what we know now, but we will not -- If there is any information that indicates that it did, we will pursue it.

Q Is it possible, then, that this did in some way lead to the start of the fire?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I have no information now that would indicate that it did, and it -- the information that we have was that it occurred hours before the fire started. We have the tapes. But we will pursue all of those questions to make sure that we get to the truth.

Q Could the fear on the part of those Davidians in the house that they were going to be burned out, could that have some influence on their setting the fire themselves?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I have no reason to believe that, but we will pursue any concern.

Q Ms. Reno, you mentioned your own credibility, that this is not good for your own credibility. What about the credibility of government and law enforcement in general? I mean, this event was a sort of a big landmark, I guess, for a revelation of --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: One of the truths that we will never be able to get to is what was the right thing to do, because we don't know whether David Koresh would have done it two weeks later on his own without any provocation and we would have been blamed for not acting.

All that we can do in law enforcement where we deal with human beings who do different things and march to different drummers is make the best judgment we can based on the

information we have available, pursue it, and then do everything we can to get the truth and to determine what can be done to avoid such tragedies for the future.

Q Ms. Reno, six years ago, you won the respect of many Americans by taking responsibility for what happened in Waco. If it turns out that the FBI or any law enforcement authorities may have had some responsibility, direct responsibility, for causing the fire, if it turns out that is the fact, if it is proven, will you take responsibility for that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know because it hasn't happened and I don't do what-ifs.

Q Ms. Reno, there's a lot of political agendas being brought to this particular table. The evidence is still overwhelming that a cult group intent on some kind of fiery end, some type of suicidal end in confrontation with government caused its own destruction and actually murdered children and people who weren't going along with that particular scenario. Is there any doubt in your mind -- any doubt in mind now -- despite the evidence of these canisters, that that fire was started on the orders of cult leaders, that they did murder the people inside that compound, and that the FBI was not responsible?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have no reason whatsoever at this point to believe that the FBI was responsible for the deaths of the people. But I think it is important for the American people to know that we have pursued every question, and pursued as far as we humanly can, to get to the truth.

Q Ms. Reno, can I ask you a question on a different subject, on the Bank of New York money laundering case? Could you bring us up to date on the investigation? And does it appear as if some of the money involved, reportedly up to \$10 billion, originated with IMF loans to Russia?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I don't comment.

Q Just to follow up, reports say that the FBI monitored

certain accounts of the Bank of New York for a period of many months while as much as, again, \$10 billion flowed through those accounts. Can you say why the FBI simply monitored it without doing anything while all this money drained out?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will not comment.

Q Can't you comment, though, at least on what effect, perhaps, the revelation of this crime had on the ongoing investigation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will not comment.

Q Can you go so far as to say that there is some indication that what is called the Red Mafia of Russia may have been a principal involved in moving billions and billions of dollars from Russia to the U.S.?

ATTY GEN. RENO: As you know, I simply do not comment in situations like this.

Q Is this a situation that you have to discuss with the State Department, considering possible diplomatic ramifications if Yeltsin's government is involved? I mean, as you pursue this investigation, do you have to keep in touch with State and NSC people?

ATTY GEN. RENO: My answer would be the same; I should not comment --

Q In a general sense, leaving aside the details of this case, which you can't comment on, inroads of the Russian organized crime groups in the United States into banking and financial markets, is this something that you have seen greater evidence of? Is it something that increasingly concerns the Justice Department?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We have focused, since I have come into office, on organized crime both in its traditional sense and in its international origins and consequence, and it is one of our highest priorities.

Q Ma'am, do you think that the Bank of New York's scandal should spur other Justice Department investigations into other U.S. banks for similar types of money laundering?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will not comment on anything specifically that you mention. But I will say that money laundering, generally, is a matter that both the Treasury Department and the Justice Department pursue as vigorously as possible.

Q Ms. Reno, back to Waco for a second, what evidence was it that convinced you to change your statements? Was it physical evidence? Was it spent canisters that were discovered? Was it paperwork or simply the comments of Dan Coulson?

ATTY GEN. RENO: What I'd like to do is make sure that we don't do anything that will interfere with whatever inquiry the Texas Rangers are doing and then make appropriate comments, at appropriate times, about what was involved.

Q Okay. Had -- (Mr. Coulson ?) -- never made the statements to the Dallas Morning News, would this factor have ever been discovered?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Based on what I have seen, I think it would have.

Q How so? I mean, is there a regular review of the facts in this case?

ATTY GEN. RENO: What I would like to do is, rather than speculate and add to the speculation, I'd like to make sure that we determine exactly how it was -- how the pieces of information were found, what the process was, and then make that public.

Q (Off mike) -- New Jersey, Governor Whitman seems pretty confident that the conflict of interest issues with the FBI agent -- (off mike) -- the state police? Can you comment on that at all?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would leave it to Governor Whitman to comment on.

Q Back to the Davidian tragedy just briefly, do you feel, Ms. Reno, that there was any justification for using any kind of incendiary ordnance around that -- during that siege? In that situation, was it justified in any way?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will see as we pursue this. But at the outset and before I approved the plan, I made inquiry as to whether the gas or the devices used for conveying the gas were incendiary, and I was told that they were not. I was concerned about the possibility of fire started by such devices.

Q At the time that the siege was going on, you were concerned about fire?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, at -- when you say "at the time the siege was going on." Prior to the FBI implementing its plan on April the 19th.

Q Ms. Reno, on the Wen Ho Lee case for a moment, the merits of that case -- (off mike). Does that concern you? And do you think it's time for the government to finally make a decision after all these months, yes or no, and -- (off mike)?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I can't comment on pending investigations except to say that, as you may have heard before, I don't speculate on time because I think it is important that justice be done and that we pursue any matter as carefully and as thoughtfully as possible.

Q What kind of investigation are you planning with Director Freeh? Is this a criminal review? Is this --

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will be talking today about just how it should be constructed.

Q And you're talking directly to Mr. Freeh even though he's

on vacation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have not talked to him yet. I intend to.

Q Ms. Reno, are you embarrassed by this at all? I mean, you've had the evidence for six years, and then the Texas Rangers and a documentary film maker come in -- I don't know how long this guy has been working on the film, but probably months, maybe a year, and they come in and they discover evidence that the FBI didn't discover in six years after a massive investigation and massive media coverage.

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'm not embarrassed; I'm very, very upset.

Q Ms. Reno, didn't the Texas Rangers have possession of this evidence for all these six years?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think that there have been different issues, and as I mentioned to you two weeks ago, we must make sure that that process is clear and that the custody of the evidence is clear.

Q Just to back up, just a minute. When you inquired before the April 19 date whether there'd been any kind of these devices used, you were assured there would be none used, were you?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I was -- asked about whether the gas or the means of delivering the gas were in any way pyrotechnic or incendiary, because I was concerned about the possibility of a fire starting. I was told that they were not.

Q Was that in the form of a directive of yours to Freeh not to use incendiary pyrotechnic devices?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: You will recall Director Freeh was not the Director of the FBI at the time. I was told -- I explained that I was concerned that there might be something that could initiate a fire, and I was told that this was not.

Q Do you think, reflecting back or perhaps even going back

through your notes, were you framing questions in terms of what was going to be used at the wooden structure, rather than the entire Branch Davidian compound? Were they parsing your words?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We will -- I don't want to speculate. We will see as we pursue the investigation.

Q How quickly can this be done?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We would like to do it as quickly as possible, consistent with getting to the truth.

Q Is there any feeling on your part initially that whatever suppressed this information was criminal?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I don't speculate. I just get to the truth and then take whatever action is appropriate.

Q I'm not asking you to speculate. I was just wondering whether or not it's your feeling at this point in time whether that's the case?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Well, a feeling is -- can be a speculation and I want to get to the truth and have it based on something other than a feeling.

Q Will you be meeting personally with Director Freeh today, or conferring by telephone?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'm going to try to confer by telephone.

Q Are you going to make people work overtime without pay, then, in the -- (inaudible). (Laughter.) What is your -- what is your thought on the suit that's being brought by the employees in that case?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think the lawyers in the Department of Justice are some of the finest professionals that I have ever worked with, and I have said before and I'll say again that one of my special missions as attorney general now and when I leave here is to let the people of the United States

know how many dedicated men and women work with them and for them all across this country. They work long hours, they're dedicated professionals, and what we must do is underline and respect their professionalism and otherwise, I think the litigation should speak for itself.

Q Are you concerned that if the Department lawyers were to be paid on an hourly basis that that spirit of professionalism could suffer?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it's important for us all to work through this issue and not litigate it in the papers but litigate it properly in the courts.

Q (Inaudible) -- there are a lot of things closing in that seem to fill your head right now; you know, the lawyers' suit, the Waco situation, Wen Ho Lee. Just -- (inaudible) -- how have -- as you look back on your tenure, could they, had they, where -- you know -- just -- do you feel like things are kind of closing in?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No. (Laughter.) You all are kind of closing in. (Laughter.)

Q Ms. Reno -- I mean, how do you -- if this --

ATTY GEN. RENO: There seem to be more of you here today.

One of the things that you learn, if you care about public service, is that it's not always the easy issues, that you face very difficult issues. You do the best you can. You try to pursue every avenue to get to the right thing to do, to get to the truth. And if you are going to let things get you down, maybe you should go do something else.

And I think the important thing for anybody that's interested in public service is move ahead, try to continue to do the right thing; if you have made a mistake, say you have made a mistake; and then try to get to what the right thing is.

Q You've mentioned that when you leave office here -- in

conjunction with saluting the professionals that work for you -- have you given any consideration to the timing of when you might leave your post?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I take it day by day. I'll be like Scarlet. (Laughter.)

Q But you're still planning to serve out your second -- (I mean, your tenure ?) -- just finishing?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think that depends on everybody else. But I am here.

Q Ms. Reno, next week there is a conference in Germany that the FBI is participating in, that deals with aspects of organized crime that pose the greatest threats to national security in Europe and Eurasia.

I notice in a FBI press release that Russia doesn't appear to be one of the key participants of this. I am not sure if they are participating.

Does U.S. law enforcement -- not just in the case of what's happening today with the Bank of New York situation -- but does U.S. law enforcement need to improve its relations with Russian law enforcement? Or are you satisfied with the state of things between --

ATTY GEN. RENO: We always are trying.

One of the things that I have commented on, on a number of occasions, is the fact that crime is becoming international in its origin and in its consequence. And, thus, I think it is important to build good strong working relationships with professional law enforcement around the world. And we will continue that, with respect to Russia and to other countries, to try to build a good working relationship of professional law enforcement officials to deal with these issues.

Q Ms. Reno, some good news in the sting at Miami International, with American Airlines. But some bad news

was that the atmosphere there was described as so "mafioso," so corrupted, that people didn't want to work there, tried to get out of being based or working at Miami International. Is that something that you feel needs to be cleaned up?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think it's important that that case be litigated not in the papers, but in the court.

Q Ms. Reno, the FBI has told the INS to stop using its database to check people arriving from overseas. The INS says that's the best way they know of to keep criminals from coming into this country. The FBI says it's a civil liberties question, that the INS doesn't have probable cause for every single person arriving. How can this be solved?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We're working on it.

Q Can you expand on that a little bit?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: One of the things that you all expect is sometimes instant solutions, and again, what we try to do is take the critically important issues that we face in law enforcement, which is how we use the authority of office in a constitutional way, consistent with people's rights of privacy, and make the best judgments we can and we'll continue to do that.

Q Ms. Reno, do you have an instant solution in regard to FIDNET? I know that you've had some congressional queries about the system. Have you responded to Representative Armey's letter or any other inquiry about --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Let me check and see. I'll ask Myron to tell you where we're at.

Q Is there any effort afoot now to reach out -- for the FBI, especially, to reach out to militia groups to try and explain this latest flap any more? I mean, the FBI already has sort of a casual program with some militia groups.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would let the FBI make any comment that was appropriate in that regard.

Q Does that mean you haven't directed --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'd let them make any comment that was appropriate.

Q Ms. Reno, what do you say to the family members of some of the Davidian members who will see this as further evidence of some sort of government coverup?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I will say that I'm going to continue to pursue this until we make sure that we have the truth and that we will continue to pursue the truth in the litigation.

Q (Off mike.)

ATTY. GEN. RENO: One of the things that people, I think, understand is that you try your best to get to the truth and you sometimes make mistakes.

The people that say, "Okay, that's it, I'm not going to pursue it anymore," don't do a service to the public. Those that follow up, get to the facts, get to the bottom of a situation are the people that I think the public will listen to. Anybody that says they never make mistakes, they never rely on information that proves to be inaccurate, I'd like to meet them.

Q But in this case, they would say you guys weren't the ones that got the truth; it was the Texas Rangers and a documentary film maker, that they -- (off mike).

ATTY GEN. RENO: Well, we'll pursue everything we can, every lead we can, every process we can to try to get to the truth.

Q Ms. Reno, do you know -- still on Waco -- do you know if the firing of those canisters violated the rules of engagement at Waco?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I won't speculate. I'll pursue it and see what the results produce.

Q And you said that you had spoken a policy before the day -- (off mike) -- that said no incendiaries were to be used; you had made that clear.

ATTY GEN. RENO: I had --

Q At what date, though.

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know the date. We had had continuing discussions over the week of April the 12th as to whether the -- what the nature of the gas was, whether it was incendiary and whether the devices were. I did not want those used. I asked for and received assurances that they were not incendiary.

Q There's a criminal case out in South Dakota that you may be familiar with where a young man was severely beaten on an Indian reservation. Is there any evidence at this point to suggest that there was a racial motive?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't have all the facts. And I have asked for a full report on it.

Thank you.

Q (Off mike) -- investigation of the Charleston, West Virginia, police department for civil rights violations. What prompted that investigation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I understand that the Civil Rights Division has publicly acknowledged that there is a pattern and practice investigation. Otherwise, I can't comment.

Q Thank you very much.

ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you.

END.

