



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**REMARKS OF ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**726 JACKSON PLACE**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**Tuesday, July 25, 2000**

**Transcribed from the audio recording for:**

**United States Department of Justice**

**10th & Constitution Avenue, N.W.**

**Room 1228**

**Washington, D.C. 20530**

**REMARKS OF ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO**

GENERAL RENO: I am delighted to be here today, because research and development sound like an unusual subject for the Department of Justice, but I think it is vital to their future.

At the Department, we strive to resolve conflicts that have already occurred, we try to learn an awful lot about preventing conflicts that might occur, but we're rarely able to think about the best way to invest for the future and how to apply the emerging technologies of today to the problems of tomorrow.

I sometimes find the hours in the day where I think, okay, what if we really learned how to treat drug abuse in this country? In 1987 I chaired a panel for the State of Florida on what to do about substance abuse. I found, according to testimony from doctors at the hearings we held around the State, that there was no course work in addictionology in any major American medical school at the time. I don't know how much research was going on at the time, and yet look at what drugs have done to America, to our budgets, to law enforcement, and we want money spent for research in drug abuse as we have had money spent in weapons and in mechanics and other factors. How do we develop a research agenda that goes to the heart of what America is concerned about? We must find the time to plan for the future, and we must invest, we must increase the efficiency of the entire criminal justice system.

If anybody has been to a major American State court system in this country in the last 20 years, they will see a system that is just based on numbers. Nobody can identify the person. They come through in the most inefficient sort of way. Major improvements are being made, but just think of what we could do if we developed a court system linked to law enforcement, linked to the prisons, that gave us the information that would enable us to plan carefully and utilize our resources as wisely as possible.

We're going to be forced into doing some things just because we're not going to be able to prosecute people, that will enable us to do some virtual courtrooms. With cyber crime, lawyers are going to become meaningless, and we're going to have to link with others halfway around the world in terms of developing courtrooms and testimony opportunities that are going to permit us to try cases, prosecute people although they may be halfway around the world.

Think of what we could do if we were able to keep the police officer in the squad car and still comply with the Constitution in terms of giving them the opportunity to confront, the defendant the opportunity to confront his accuser. These are the types of issues that we have got to

research, we've got to develop, if we're going to make the criminal justice system a system that matches the development of these last 15 years.

I think it's an extraordinary challenge, because you're faced with lawyers.

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: Lawyers are notoriously inefficient. They are notoriously focused on the Constitution. I have found some very good lawyers that are willing to look at issues, look at the Constitution, look at the technology, and make sure that John Marshall's dream of that Constitution as a living document that could change from year to year and in development to development holds true.

But finding the lawyer who understands cyber technology, or who understands complicated physiological questions dealing with drug abuse, while at the same time understanding the Constitution, is difficult to find. These are going to be the issues that we have got to confront.

We can anticipate new materials designed molecule by molecule or even atom by atom, materials, in the words of the President, with ten times the strength of steel and only a small fraction of the weight. What that could mean to officers that I have seen killed because they didn't wear their vest because it was too uncomfortable on the border in the heat, that shouldn't be in a Nation that spends the moneys we spend for aircraft carriers and things like this. We should have a research agenda in mind, on the way, that will enable us to properly protect our officers in their law enforcement duties.

The White House Office of Science and Technology is at the forefront of identifying and promoting the research and development required to enable us to make all these dreams a reality, the good dreams the reality and the bad dreams, enable us to deal with the bad dreams.

I think one of the issues that confronts us -- I think one

of the most remarkable speeches that I have heard about, and I even found a recording of it, is Eisenhower's farewell address. It was never really focused upon by most of America because it got caught up in the inauguration of John F. Kennedy, but it is a speech that everybody should read and reread on many occasions, because it talks about the industrial-military complex.

We have kind of inherited in law enforcement the industrial-military complex, because with downsizing the complex started looking for other people to kind of bring into the arena, and they were very good about doing that. How we deal with that so that we're not captives of any complex but only that that is of the issue, what is in the best interest of the American people, is going to be important for us.

How do we prevent people from selling us something we don't need, or don't know how to use, that's not based on sound planning but based on commercial incentives? How do we have a research agenda that is realistic, one that the Nation can afford, one that avoids duplication, and make sure that we're spending our dollars as wisely as possible? We've got to be careful in that regard, but I think we can do so much if we work together. We need to apply the same talent and resources that we now apply to solving human illnesses to the criminal justice system.

Alcohol abuse. We've spent so much money on drug abuse that if you come back and look at the figures today, it is alcohol, not drugs, that is driving on so many occasions youth violence. Alcohol has been a plague upon our house for all our human existence. We should be spending money in an orderly way to deal with this and learn how to cope with it once and for all. Any nation that can send a person to the Moon ought to have come further in dealing with this issue and in understanding how to cope.

What makes a person violent? It has been fascinating to see some of the research that corresponds lead poisoning in those early developmental years with behavior, and violent behavior in subsequent years. There does appear to be a correlation. Let's find out about it, and if we can't

afford to tear down the buildings that are causing it, let us develop quick, easy means of providing an antidote or some preventive mechanism that can avoid it, but let us not sit there and watch the babies of America grow up in lead-poisoning environments that don't have to be if we use science the right way.

One of the things that I find people always surprised about is that I majored in chemistry at Cornell. I have forgotten most of what I learned --

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: -- except the wonder and magic of science and what it can be used for if we focus on it, research, and understand how we use it best.

This forum brings us together. We have senior law enforcement officials here, prosecutors, judicial officials, and implementors, technology officers within all the segments of the justice system, and researchers. It's an exciting opportunity to identify and plan, but may I suggest to you one of the great challenges that we face is where are we going to get the people?

I can't afford anybody. They've gone to the private sector just about the time they're becoming the expert. I can't get people into the justice system to even plan the basics. This Nation, before it even thinks about the long-range issues, has got to figure out how it comes to match the revolution of the communications industry that we've seen.

We have faced enormous challenges, though. We have now seen crime down 7 years in a row, and some people say it's just like this, you know, it's going to go back up. I don't think it has to go back up if we use information correctly.

Let me explain what a prosecutor in Miami would do for 15 years. The police would make the arrest, we would take the case, we would prosecute it, we would not know how it fit into other arrests or other crimes that had not yet been solved. We had some idea of the pattern. In 1984 we heard

about this strange substance, and we saw the crimes start up. We didn't know what it was. It turned out to be crack. We've learned in the last 15 years just what that means.

We now have another substance. It's been around, but it's started to get a quick hold across America, from Spokane up to Philadelphia, and that's meth. We should not stand by and watch meth put this country in the grip that crack did, yet enough expert work has been done on it to indicate to us that meth is going to be more insidious, because you can function longer without disastrous effects than you could with crack.

My dream is that every law enforcement jurisdiction in this country develop data bases that enable us to begin to forecast what is going to happen. I just do it in concepts, because I'm not good at the science of it, but let us take the D.C. area. Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Northern Virginia, and the District, one common data base, arrest reports, incident reports, emergency room admissions, Don Adamdak data, any other effective, useful information that can be put into the computer that every law enforcement jurisdiction in the country of any major size would have analysts trained in how to use the data.

The data, even if we assimilate it, correlate it, and put it through the machines in the best way possible won't mean anything unless we have people who understand it.

Then this jurisdiction would sit down together and say, okay, here are the three major organizations, drug organizations causing most of the problem. Here's the delivery system that is bringing it from this place and this place. Here are the links to this place.

This is the jurisdiction that has the highest incidents. This is where we need the policing in the next year. This is what is happening in domestic violence. It seems to be going up. It doesn't seem to be going down. There appears to be a correlation between further violence and the lack of shelters in this particular jurisdiction, thus, that jurisdiction should spend more on shelters.

We could do so much with what has been done to date if we could plan it, implement it, and work with the appropriators so that they knew their dollars, the taxpayer's dollars were being spent as wisely as possible. If we can inform America with information, we can do so much.

How do we prevent crime? How do we prevent a Columbine? How do we prevent so much of what we see happening with youth violence? Let's look at the record again. Let's get the information. Let's start linking until we have the major issue that confronts us.

There are people that name new systems strange things that cause problems just by their names, but it doesn't have to be. If we can explain to the American people what a system is, what its purpose is, in clear, understandable terms, and then make sure, as we put these systems into effect, that we focus on what America likes most -- Americans want to be let alone.

If they are minding their own business, if they're not doing anything wrong, they don't want Government telling them what to do and they don't want Government snooping on them. How do we explain that to the American people? We need good scientists to help us do that, but we have got to make sure that we focus on privacy issues and that they are as important a part of the research as anything else.

Finally, with weapons of mass destruction we have had the opportunity to have exercises to see what these weapons can do. Ought we to be about developing resources, doing research that will disable these weapons before they get off the ground? Ought we not be able to develop new mechanisms to respond immediately in more effective ways?

These are the things that we should be about. These are the issues we should be confronting.

I will go off in my little red truck in about 6 months and see a country that I have come to love, all of it, better than I ever dreamed that I could. Its people are

magnificent. They want so to contribute, and I will have time to think about research, and planning. That should be part of everybody's agenda and clearly, in terms of law enforcement and criminal justice, we can do so much more.

These are the challenges. I hope that you all will come up with some ideas today. I will welcome them, and I would ask as one final parting comment, if you were the Attorney General of the United States, what would you do? What would you recommend to the next Attorney General in terms of information technology, in terms of global networks, in terms of the use of DNA, in terms of ideas and concepts that I have not even heard about and dreamed of?

How would you harness that knowledge, that energy, and that information and come to what is the ultimate question of how do we prevent crime? How do we prevent it before it even starts, and those that say it's really not possible, I ask this question: How can a Toronto, a city of similar size to Chicago, from 1992 to 1996, have 100 gun homicides and Chicago have 3,000? Part of it depends on people, but part of it depends on people's ability to research and understand the remarkable human spirit, and why sometimes it errs and why in most cases in this country it continues to inspire.

I have had the opportunity to hear from ministers of justice who come to this country from the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe. I will leave this office absolutely in awe of the institution of democracy. It is so fragile. We must cherish it, and we must never take it for granted. In too many instance we have failed to support democracy in terms of research. It can make a difference if we supported it in the way we support our efforts to defend democracy around the world.

Thank you so much for being here. I think it has some exciting possibilities, and I will look forward to the answer to the question. I will start it if you give me the answer early on, and I will make sure that whoever comes after me pursues it, because I think it can make -- research, science, information, data, the truth, the truth in the context of the human experience, can make such a



difference to us all.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, General Reno's remarks ended.)