



**WEEKLY MEDIA AVAILABILITY WITH**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

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**9:15 A.M. EDT**

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Welcome. Good morning. As we enter the final months of the administration, it is sometimes tempting to talk of our accomplishments rather than what we hope to accomplish, and to talk of problems we've solved rather than problems that still need to be solved. It's tempting to celebrate the fact that crime is at its lowest point in more than a quarter of a century, but none of us should become complacent.

We must make more progress if we are to have a lasting impact on violence, and I truly believe that we can.

Today I am headed to Massachusetts to highlight three key crime reduction strategies, strategies that are helping to end the culture of violence, and strategies that deserve our continued support. I will visit Lowell to announce a special new grant program administered by the COPS Office.

The program called "Police as Problem Solvers and Peacemakers" is another example of the remarkable work the COPS Office has done over the last six years.

As you know, COPS has helped to put more police on the

streets. According to our June count, more than 68,000 police already have been hired or redeployed. But COPS is doing more. It is also advancing the cause of community policing, building trust and confidence between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

That's what the Urban Institute's Independent Report on the COPS program says, and that's what Police as Problem Solvers and Peacemakers is all about.

Secondly, I will visit Dorchester. There we will announce the opening of a new domestic violence court supported by a grant under the Violence Against Women Act. Domestic violence crimes continue to plague our communities and pose a threat to the lives of both men and women. But the Violence Against Women Act is helping us to fight back, and Dorchester is a great example. The new domestic violence court will ensure that batterers are held accountable for their crimes and that victims need no longer endure abuse.

Finally, I will address the critical issue of prisoner re-entry in a meeting with the mayor, the U.S. attorney, and the police commissioner.

With nearly 600,000 offenders being released across the country this year, we must do a better job of managing their reintegration into the community. We must couple systems of strict accountability with support systems.

If we prevent returning offenders from committing new crimes, we have much to gain.

If we fail, we see the cycle of violence repeat itself.

These strategies work. That's why Congress should reauthorize the COPS program and fully fund our fiscal year 2001 budget request. That's why Congress should reauthorize and improve the Violence Against Women Act so that all victims of domestic violence are protected, including Native American women, battered immigrant women and women in dating relationships. And that's why Congress should fully fund our fiscal year 2001 reentry initiative,

including funds for the Department of Justice to support state and local reentry partnerships and reentry courts.

Each community in America focuses on what it can do to further reduce violence. If we analyze where we're at and what the problems are in each particular community, if we do this in a bipartisan, thoughtful way, we can make a lasting difference against violence in this country.

Q Ms. Reno, have you been in contact with the leaders in Congress about reauthorizing these programs, and what are the prospects for -- ATTY. GEN. RENO: I am very hopeful that the reauthorization will occur. We have been in conversation over the summer, and I am hopeful that this will occur.

Q Has anyone told you that it will occur, though? I mean --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I don't think that anybody can say definitely, and that's the reason we're talking about it.

Q Ms. Reno, you've only gotten 68,000 of the cops actually onto the street. I know there's been a lot of ballyhooing about how many have been funded or are in the pipeline, but why is it that there are not 100,000 actually on the street or redeployed?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: One of the reasons is that to properly implement programs for automation of a police department, to free up officers' time to be redeployed, requires careful planning on the part of the police department to ensure that the computer system, the automation systems, are well-planned, that they fit into the current structure, the police department, that they measure and perform as they should.

This has been an issue where we have been providing technical assistance to police departments in the implementation of these efforts, but it is taking longer than thought, and we are monitoring it very closely.

In addition, you've got to hire and train police, and there

have been hires that we need to pursue, and what I'm doing is making sure that we have a schedule so that we see exactly where we're at in terms of achieving the 100,000 police officer figure.

Q So what is that schedule? When do you hope finally to achieve that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will ask Myron to give you that figure.

Q Do you have any problems or disputes of any kind with the Urban Institute's report on the COPS program, or do you fully agree with everything that's in there?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think that with respect to the count, their count is, I think, earlier in time. I don't think they have the new figures from this summer.

But I will ask Myron to clarify that with you.

Q It says here, in their summary, the COPS summary, that 1 percent of the grantees, the COPS grantees, are receiving 31 percent of all the funds awarded in '97. And it justifies that here because they have the highest murder counts.

Do you think that's fair?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would have to look at precise language and see just what it is. And I'll ask Myron to give you a response.

Q Ms. Reno, is anyone in the department reviewing the Firestone tire controversy and -- for the purpose of finding out whether there should be a department investigation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We've received a request from Senator Leahy to look into the matter, and we're reviewing that request to see what, if any, federal action by the Justice Department is warranted.

We are discussing the matter with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which has primary regulatory responsibility, and we're considering what, if any, statutes apply.

Q Did Senator Leahy's request contain any specifics, whether he's asking you to look at -- what exactly involving Firestone he's asking to look at, in terms of obstruction, possible records?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will ask Myron to see just what we can release. I think it would be more appropriate for Senator Leahy to release it.

Q Ms. Reno, what can you report to us about your trip to Colombia? Specifically, do you think Colombia is going to be receiving sufficient arms, sufficient cash to fight the drug traficantes, the growers especially?

Is that a hopeful situation in your eyes? What can you tell us?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am very hopeful. It was a very good day. I was impressed by the candor of everyone.

I was impressed by the dedication of the government of Colombia to address these issues.

And I reiterated to my colleagues in Colombia their -- our great respect and gratitude for the work that they have done with the extradition of the drug traffickers, with the bilateral initiative that we have ongoing, that is producing results.

And I think that from a law enforcement perspective, we've had some of the best cooperation that we've had in many years.

Q What does the increasing productivity of the areas held by the FARC and the other rebel groups, the increased productivity of cocaine especially -- how does that bode for the U.S. market?

Doesn't that mean there's more cocaine to catch coming into this country?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it's going to require that we redouble our efforts in terms of focusing on the traffickers, getting them out of Colombia to be tried here for crimes that are committed here, and that I feel very hopeful that we will be able to work together to achieve our common goals.

Q What about the 1.3 billion? Is there any accountability on it? Has it been earmarked to specific places in Colombia, and is that being monitored?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have asked our staff in the Justice Management Division to do everything it can with respect to monies coming to the Department of Justice or for which we are responsible, to ensure accountability and so that at the end of the program, we can tell the people where the money went.

Q Ms. Reno, back to the COPS program for a second: You said it's taking longer than you thought to get police out on the street.

How much of that delay --

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, what has taken longer than we thought was getting the automation systems implemented in a sound and organized way.

Q I see. What is the -- I guess, then, what is your experience, then, with the delinquency rate of departments failing to pick up their end of the cost of keeping those officers funded and on the street?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We are monitoring that, and whatever we can make available to you, we shall do so.

Q Okay.

Q Ms. Reno, can you tell us anything about the investigation of former CIA Director Deutch and whether you've received a recommendation from your special prosecutor in that case?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have not received a recommendation yet from the Criminal Division.

Q Ms. Reno, there was a decision in July by the D.C. Circuit that essentially blocked the investigation --

campaign finance investigation of Haley Barbour and the Republican National Committee. Is the Justice Department appealing that decision in order to pursue that investigation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I can't comment.

Q About the prisoner reentry thing you mentioned earlier, I'm just curious; what do you think of these proposals that have been published in newspapers, op-ed pieces by James Q. Wilson (sp) and John Di Julio (sp), advocating mandatory regular, perhaps weekly, drug testing of prisoners who are on parole or on probation, and sanctions, like sending them back to jail if they fail those tests? What's your assessment of that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I -- what I think is important is to use, for example, the model of the drug court that we used in Miami, as a carrot-and-stick approach. And that's one of the efforts that I hope will be tried in the reentry court process.

But you -- it's not just the testing that is important; we've got to make sure that these people are prepared, as they come from prison, to obtain employment, to obtain proper housing, to have support mechanisms that will give them a chance of success.

At the same time, the suggestions by Mr. Wilson (sp) and his colleagues that they be held accountable is also very important, and testing can be very appropriate in some of

those situations.

Q The whole probation and parole system has kind of been popularly viewed as kind of a joke for the past -- I don't know how many years, but a long time, with minimal supervision. Do you have any sense that -- is that changing, really, at all?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think some of you have heard me on the subject of courts and what a very important force they can be in ensuring proper supervision. I think that what has happened in our history of the last 25 to 30 years is that the courts were the place that people came after other institutions, including the family, schools, and the neighborhood, had failed an individual. And the courts were at the end of the line.

They became overwhelmed, particularly during the mid-80s, with the advent of the crack epidemic.

As they became overwhelmed, they could do -- they were less and less effective, and that then created credibility problems, additional credibility problems, where courts were sometimes viewed as not meaning what they said, because they didn't have the resources, and their caseloads were so huge.

The drug court, as we established it, provided for a caseload which the court could manage.

It provided resources to match that caseload, and a time frame for jurisdiction that gave the court a real chance at changing behavior.

That has been evaluated and has proven successful.

I think with juvenile delinquency, with child abuse and neglect, with domestic violence, courts can be a powerful force for ensuring that somebody can come back to the community or be in the community with a chance of getting off on the right foot. In other words, the courts are not just guilt assessors, and they -- they're not just



performing the function of holding somebody accountable, but they are helping to solve the problem that created the crime in the first place.

Q Ms. Reno, what can you tell us about the latest shooting by a Prince George's County policeman, this time traveling miles into Fairfax County to shoot an unarmed man?

Can you tell us anything about what the FBI and Justice are doing with that specific case, and also, more broadly, any investigation of Prince George's County police system?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Right now, I am expecting some word on just what will be done, and I have no recommendation yet.

Q On the Carnivore, there was another hearing yesterday on Capitol Hill, and I believe that yesterday was also your deadline for applications by universities interested in conducting your independent study.

What is the status of your selection process? Can you tell us how many applicants you have now and how soon you'll name someone?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I am told that the Procurement Integrity Act prohibits us from talking about the applications, including who and how many have been received. If I am incorrect in that, we will get you the information as soon as possible.

Q But the process has -- the applications are in, and that's done, right? (Inaudible.)

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'm told that I can tell you that the selection team is currently meeting.

Q All right. Let me try one more. There have been reports that some universities were interested and backed out because they thought the process might be too restrictive. Were there any instances in which universities took themselves out of the running? Can you --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I don't think I can really comment on it. I'm as frustrated sometimes as you are by the process.

Q While we're on Carnivore, any progress in changing the name -- (laughter) -- to something like "Rover" or "Fluffy" or "Spot"?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think the feeling is that we want to get the report, see what, if anything, needs to be done, and go to a second stage with a new name.

Q Well, I'll ask another question. Did you have an opportunity to meet Vicente Fox, and what do you think of the man?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We had a very good conversation. I had the opportunity to talk with him and I look forward, in the limited time I will have, to working with his attorney general in the same way that I have worked with Jorge Madrazo in a good, close working relationship.

Q Do you find Vicente Fox, did you find him to be a solid man, a solid, capable leader, or can you make any assessment about that?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: He is very impressive.

Q Very impressive guy. A good guy, I think.

Q How are you doing on your list of final priorities?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: They're coming along.

Q Any details?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: What I'm trying to do is to take the projects that we have been working on and see what has been done and what can reasonably be done before we leave to finish projects that everyone thinks are worthwhile and useful.

In other words, I don't want to waste the taxpayers' time.

Q I saw this Rory Little (sp) Law Review article which was reported in "USA Today" Tuesday on the death penalty which analyzed death penalty authorizations geographically and found that in states where there's a lot of popular support for the death penalty, the federal prosecutors are asking for and receiving authorization for a lot more death penalty cases compared to places where the states don't allow the death penalty.

Do you think it's more appropriate to have a national uniform standard for who gets put to death under federal cases and who does not, or a different local standard that's sensitive to the local culture on death penalty?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think federal law should apply, and I think -- with respect to cases in which there is a federal interest -- and I think that there should be a standard for applying it.

Q So you'd go for a nation uniform standard?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think, with respect to cases involving federal interests, it is important to have a uniform approach so that people are not treated differently.

Q Well, I know you haven't yet gotten your death penalty study ready for release, but do these results that Rory Little (sp) came up with and were reported in "USA Today" trouble you at all?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think any time you are engaged in determining who should live and who should die you've got to look at all the factors and make the best judgment that you can.

Q Ms. Reno, to jump back to the Firestone recall matter, are you saying that the -- or, is the department reviewing both criminal and civil statutes to determine if any apply?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: We're reviewing everything to see what would be appropriate, and that would include civil or

criminal processes to see what, if anything, is appropriate.

Thank you.

Q (Off mike.)

Q That's a nice river.

Q Oh, did you ever get to kayaking?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I went home to Miami over Labor Day and I practiced my Eskimo rolls in warm water. (Laughter.)

Q Your Eskimo rolls?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Yes.

Q You were baking?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Noooo. I was flipping over in the kayak. (Laughter.)

Q (Inaudible) -- knew that.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I didn't do all that well, but I'm almost about to make it. (Laughter.)

STAFF: All right. Thank you.

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