



Department of Justice

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ADDRESS

BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY

AT GRADUATION CEREMONIES

OF THE

INTERNATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

February 28, 1964

I am particularly glad to be here today at the first senior course graduation from the world's first International Police Academy.

As you know, President Kennedy believed very strongly in the importance of this Academy. I share that belief, and I would like to take a few minutes this morning to talk with you about it.

First, however, let me congratulate you on your graduation and mention the pride we all take in having had you here.

We have welcomed you as friends who have come to join us in preparing for the task we share; now we salute you and thank you for the distinction which your experience and serious purpose have contributed to this school.

Perhaps your stay here would be less significant if you were returning to a world of quiet and ordered calm. But this is not the case.

As you know, the world today is buffeted by the winds of change, in some instance winds that have struck with hurricane force.

Invariably, these winds have carried new and grave responsibilities for those who enforce the law.

Here in the United States, for example, the struggle for civil rights has posed a real challenge for those police who strive to maintain the delicate balance between individual rights and the law.

This is our problem. We are working at it and we are making progress. This Government and the vast majority of the American people are committed to achieving equal opportunity for all our citizens.

There have been disorders and there may be more. But we will achieve this goal within a framework of law and justice.

Elsewhere changes have been more violent. Some of your countries recently have faced what Abraham Lincoln referred to as the "grave question whether any government, not too strong for the liberties of its people, can be strong enough to maintain its existence in great emergencies."

These are critical days for law enforcement. From Northern South America to East Africa, on Cyprus and in Panama, in the Near East and at half-a-dozen points in the Far East, those who enforce the law face challenges without precedent.

I don't have to tell you this. As each of you knows so well, this is true of your nations as it is of ours.

But I would like to emphasize that your job is not only more difficult-- it is a great deal more important in the world today. Your victories will be greater -- your mistakes more costly -- than ever before.

We have just passed through an era where the big war was replaced by the small war. We seem now to be entering a period where the small war is a rarity; but sabotage, banditry, violence and terrorism are rampant.

In the world today, most wars are "police actions." Law enforcement officials are a very real first line of defense, and the fate of governments and nations hangs in the balance.

I know that two of your group are from Venezuela. Though we have seen fine police work in other countries, Venezuela is the most recent and perhaps the most spectacular example.

The Venezuelan police, particularly in Caracas, scored a stunning upset victory for their nation and for the forces of democratic freedom everywhere in the world.

As you know, it was essentially through effective police work that Venezuela was able to elect the first constitutional successor to a constitutional president in its history.

The Venezuelan police turned a losing battle into a big win. And they saved their nation in the course of overcoming terrorists who sought to kill a policeman a day in Caracas alone.

These are high stakes, to be sure. But you know, as I do, that the opportunity to render essential service exists in each of your countries today, as it does in Venezuela. And you know, also, that this opportunity will continue to exist as far as we can see into the future.

This may be the generation of rising expectations throughout the world. It may be the time when millions of people are released from the chains of ignorance, poverty and disease which have bound them for centuries.

But it is also the age of nails in the street and the plastic bomb; it is the age of arson, sabotage, kidnappings and murder for political purposes; it is the age of hit-run terrorist activities coordinated on a global scale.

And there is an inherent contradiction between these two conditions. People cannot achieve peace and security, cannot even insure their own personal safety, except under the rule of law.

Only under a government which is an expression of their own will, administered with stability and strength, can they achieve these goals. They cannot do it in chaos.

Thus, because order under law is an essential of freedom today, the role of those with the strength to preserve order is enhanced. Yours is a high calling -- and a grave responsibility.

You need every advantage you can bring to the job! You need courage, dedication, ability in full measure. And beyond that you need a knowledge of the modern scientific techniques used in your profession.

You need to be able to take advantage of the gains made by others; you need the stimulation of being able to trade lessons and exchange views with your professional contemporaries.

That is why this school seems to me to be so valuable.

I know that there are no "rookies" here. I know that you are a group of top-flight professionals at the head of the police organizations in your own countries and representing nearly 600 years of combined police experience.

But I'm confident that the sharing of this experience has been valuable over the past thirteen weeks. I'm confident that you have learned from each other, and I know that we have learned much from you.

Just a little over a year ago, I visited the Inter-American Police Academy in Panama. I was impressed at the time, and I have been more impressed since at the accomplishments of its graduates throughout Latin America.

A year from now you will be at your posts throughout the world.

You will be face-to-face with the tough dangerous challenges you have considered in the classes and seminars here at the International Police Academy, the challenges we have touched on briefly this morning.

But always remember that you do not stand alone. The American people share your determination to choose your own future without coercion or subversion, without discrimination or dictation.

In our resolution to oppose tyranny we, in this country, will measure up to any threat or challenge. We will do so strengthened by the knowledge that you -- and men and women like you -- throughout the world stand with us,

I thank you.