

1 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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3
4 PRESS CONFERENCE WITH
5 HONORABLE JANET RENO,
6 ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES,
7 HONORABLE PAUL HELMKE,
8 MAYOR OF FORT WAYNE, INDIANA,
9 AND
10 HONORABLE RITA MULLINS,
11 MAYOR OF PALATINE, ILLINOIS

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13
14 Friday, August 5, 1994
15 Conference Room B
16 Department of Justice
17 Headquarters Building
18 10th and Constitution, N.W.
19 Washington, D.C.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(12:05 p.m.)

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3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: In this past year I have
4 had a chance to visit so many communities around this
5 country, talk with mayors, police chiefs, sheriffs, police
6 officers who are on the line in terms of the fight against
7 crime. We have tried to fashion the crime legislation to
8 meet the needs of people who are on the front lines in
9 America, the people in the cities and the counties of
10 America, the people who are responsible for our safety on
11 the streets.

12 The mayors of this country have been
13 extraordinarily supportive in our efforts. I have walked
14 the streets of their cities with Democrat and Republican
15 mayors. They've given me good ideas. Those ideas are
16 reflected in this legislation.

17 But most of all, they and the people they
18 represent, the police officers and the people they serve,
19 have told me again and again that it's time to get
20 something passed that can have a real impact on crime,
21 that can make a real difference, that's funded, that's
22 balanced with both punishment, policing, and prevention.
23 And it is with their support that I think this legislation
24 has come this far.

25 Here is just an example of the major police

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1 organizations, the prosecutors, the attorneys, the State
2 attorneys general, the mayors who are supporting this
3 crime legislation. It is so critically important that we
4 get it passed so that we can begin to provide the support
5 for people in our communities to get the job done.

6 I'm really appreciative that today the Mayor of
7 Fort Wayne, Indiana, Paul Helmke, can be here, and I'd
8 like for him to say a few words. Mayor

9 MAYOR HELMKE: Thank you

10 My name is Paul Helmke. I'm the Mayor of Fort
11 Wayne, Indiana. I'm also a trustee for the United States
12 Conference of Mayors and I am the Past President,
13 Immediate Past President, of the National Conference of
14 Republican Mayors and Local Elected Officials.

15 A couple days ago 13 or 14 Republican mayors
16 sent a letter to every Republican Senator and every
17 Republican Congressman indicating our strong support for
18 the crime bill. I'm here today to reiterate that support
19 We need the crime bill passed.

20 The number one issue in my city is crime. Every
21 day I meet with a judge or a prosecutor or a victim or a
22 police officer to talk about the problems of crime in my
23 community. People want something done. Crime rates high
24 above Whitewater, high above the health care debate, high
25 above the welfare debate. Crime is affecting people in

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1 all of our communities.

2 Fort Wayne is a city of about 185,000 people
3 We are the second largest city in Indiana. It's a good,
4 good place to live, a good place to do businesses.
5 Yesterday I traveled to, I visited one of our industrial
6 plants, and they're concerned about crime. The cars are
7 getting shot up in the parking lot. People are fearful at
8 the plant. It's an economic development issue.

9 With the school year getting ready to start,
10 teachers and students are concerned about what's going to
11 be happening. People want to see that something's done
12 about crime.

13 We've tried to do something in our community.
14 In the six years that I have been Mayor, we've taken our
15 police budget from \$10 million to \$20 million. We've gone
16 from 300 officers to 360 officers. We've tried to
17 implement community-oriented policing, started a plan to
18 implement community-oriented policing.

19 We're doing something that makes a difference,
20 but our murder rate is going up. I think we've got about
21 24 murders already this year. Our record was last year at
22 about 30 murders. At the rate we're going we're going to
23 have 40 murders this year.

24 It's spilling over into the smaller communities
25 near us. Small towns that thought they were safe are now

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1 seeing crimes of violence, are seeing drive-by shootings,
2 are seeing weapons and gangs and guns.

3 Something has to be done. We had a triple
4 murder earlier this year. Most of the victims were from
5 Detroit. It's something that goes beyond our city
6 boundary line. The drugs don't come from Fort Wayne, they
7 don't come from Indiana, they don't come from this country
8 most of the time. They come from elsewhere. The gangs
9 travel between the areas. The guns travel between the
10 areas.

11 We're doing a lot at the local level to make a
12 difference, but we need some help. It's a national issue
13 and it requires a national response.

14 Now, a lot of people have things that they can
15 pick out of the crime bill and say they don't like this
16 part or they don't like that part or they wish there was
17 more of this or more of that. It might not be a perfect
18 bill, but we need something now. The American people want
19 something now.

20 I don't think there's a single soul in my city
21 who probably understands what a vote on the rule is. That
22 doesn't matter to them. They want to see something
23 passed. This crime bill has a good balance of money for
24 policing, money for prevention, and money for prisons. I
25 think that's a crucial thing. It covers all the bases.

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1 And prevention is crucial, because when people
2 talk to me they want to make sure that the police are
3 responding quickly to a crime, but they prefer to have a
4 situation where the crime doesn't occur in the first
5 place.

6 With community-oriented policing, with local
7 partnerships, with programs that find alternatives for our
8 young people, I think we can make a difference. I think
9 it's time that we stop the gamesmanship out here and get
10 something done for the American people.

11 Republican mayors around the country, mayors
12 around the country, strongly want this. We strongly
13 support the crime bill. We want the vote on the rule to
14 go forward. We want to see something happen. We want to
15 see it happen soon.

16 Thank you.

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much,
18 Mayor.

19 Now I'd like to introduce Mayor Rita Mullins of
20 Palatine, Illinois. Thank you so much for being here,
21 Mayor.

22 MAYOR MULLINS: Thank you.

23 Palatine is a suburban community right outside
24 of Chicago and we've had our share of crime and violence.
25 On behalf of the Women's Mayors Caucus of the U.S.

1 Conference of Mayors, we urge the passage of the crime
2 bill. At the January '93 meeting of the Conference of
3 Mayors we made a strong statement in support of crime
4 control. It was women mayors who urged America to wake
5 up, to unite against the flood of violence that has
6 submerged communities of all sizes, urban and suburban.

7 The sooner this bill is finalized, the sooner we
8 can escalate the war on crime. The sooner we can put more
9 police on our streets, the sooner we can take more young
10 people off of them, out of harm's way, and into programs
11 that offer hope for a productive life.

12 Everyone in America agrees something needs to be
13 done. After all, what good is the American dream if
14 you're afraid for your life. Everyone, that is, except
15 the NRA. The NRA is using fear-mongering language, blood
16 money, and intimidation to remove the provisions for an
17 assault weapons ban.

18 No one wants to take anything away from law-
19 abiding citizens. Law-abiding citizens by definition
20 abide by the law. They have guns for hunting, target
21 shooting, and self-defense. Just what does law-abiding
22 citizen need or want to use a military-style assault
23 weapon for? No one has been able to answer that.

24 Those weapons only put money in the pocket of
25 the gun manufacturers, who are the real wealth and power

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1 behind the NRA. And those are the weapons of choice for
2 the bad guys.

3 I pray Congress will have the courage of their
4 constituents' convictions and do the right thing -- pass
5 the crime bill now and stem the tide of violence.

6 Thank you.

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We'd be happy to take
8 your questions.

9 MAYOR HELMKE: I was just going to mention --
10 excuse me -- that one other Mayor was supposed to be here
11 today, Paul Soglin, who is the Mayor of Madison,
12 Wisconsin, and apparently his flight got messed up in
13 O'Hare. But he's representing -- he's Vice President of
14 the National Conference of Democrat Mayors and there
15 should be a statement that is handed out on his behalf.
16 He has been Mayor of Madison for 16 out of the past 26
17 years.

18 They're doing a lot in Madison. They've had
19 some weed and seed money. He has questions about the
20 death penalty, but he feels very strongly that the crime
21 bill needs to be passed. He calls it the Neighborhood
22 Commitment Act. He considers it the single most important
23 domestic legislation of the last decade.

24 I just wanted to mention that the Democrat
25 mayors were supposed to be represented here today, too.

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1 But Rita and I are both Republicans and we wanted to
2 represent that side also.

3 Excuse me .

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO : A good bipartisan effort
5 this morning .

6 MAYOR HELMKE : yes .

7 MAYOR MULLINS : Absolutely .

8 QUESTION : Attorney General, one organization I
9 don't see on that list is the National Rifle Association.
10 Do you find this particularly frustrating, this lack of
11 progress in Congress and reports that the NRA is trying to
12 subvert the bill because of the assault weapons ban?

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO : I think it's important
14 for the American people to speak out through the mayors,
15 through calls, letting people know how important it is to
16 get a bill passed .

17 We saw the momentary delay in the passage of the
18 Brady law, but then the American people spoke out. And I
19 think they're in the process of speaking out now, saying
20 the time has come to get a crime bill passed, a crime bill
21 that can address the issue of assault weapons that have no
22 purpose but to kill, and get the moneys to the streets
23 where it counts for policing that can make a difference .

24 QUESTION : As a follow-up to that, this is not
25 going as quickly and as smoothly, a la the Brady bill, as

1 the administration had hoped. Are you still confident
2 that you will get the bill with the assault weapons ban?

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I am very confident that
4 the American people are going to speak out and that the
5 will of the people will be expressed in the crime bill
6 that provides for a ban on assault weapons, that provides
7 for community policing where it counts, that provides for
8 prisons to house the truly dangerous offenders for the
9 length of time the judges are sentencing them, and that
10 expands on prevention programs that are making a
11 difference now.

12 QUESTION: I don't think Brady went that
13 smoothly either, to tell you the truth.

14 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It took a long time to
15 get Brady passed.

16 QUESTION: Are there any Republican Congressman
17 and, if so, how many, who are going to be voting for the
18 rule?

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that we have
20 been talking to both Republicans and Democrats, and I
21 think that there are going to be a number of Republicans
22 who support the rule, who support the final passage,
23 because I think everybody wants to join together. It is
24 my earnest hope that we will all come together, that we
25 will leave partisan politics behind, and that we will pass

1 a bill together that can have an impact.

2 QUESTION: To follow up, the rules votes have
3 often been partisan and that's what the Republican mayors
4 here are dealing with. Do you have any insight into
5 whether you have convinced any of your party's members in
6 the House?

7 MAYOR HELMKE: As I mentioned, we sent a letter
8 signed by I think 13 Republican mayors on the 2nd. That
9 included Mayor Reardan from Los Angeles, mayors from Utah,
10 Illinois, Nebraska, a number of States, representing a lot
11 of different size cities and a lot of different areas
12 around the country. That went to every Republican Senator
13 and every Republican Congressman.

14 The rule vote has traditionally been a party
15 line vote. I think what's happening is that the people in
16 America are learning what a rule vote is, why it's
17 significant. They want the crime bill to be able to come
18 to a vote.

19 I've been calling some of the Republican
20 Congressman that had supported the bill in the House
21 earlier. We're hopeful that we'll get some positive
22 response from some.

23 QUESTION: But nothing thus far?

24 MAYOR HELMKE: Well, the ones I've talked to,
25 some are willing to consider it and are leaning that way

1 possibly, but haven't made a decision yet.

2 MAYOR MULLINS: What we have to all remember is
3 that crime and violence and death by these acts is neither
4 a Democrat or Republican issue, and that the people of
5 America have got to contact their legislators whether they
6 be Democrat or Republican and tell them, urge them to pass
7 this bill.

8 MAYOR HELMKE: Again, most people don't know
9 what the rule is. Most people don't know how the games
10 are played out here. Most people want something done on
11 the crime bill. This is a disaster, a relief bill.
12 There's a disaster occurring in communities large and
13 small throughout the country, and I think people at this
14 stage want to see something done.

15 Generally they're not used to turning to the
16 Federal Government on this sort of thing or they're used
17 to posturing of some sort or symbolic acts. But at the
18 local level, where we have to deal with real victims and
19 real police officers that are facing danger and getting
20 shot at, I think people in my city and cities around the
21 country are realizing that there is a role that the
22 national government can play, the Federal Government can
23 play, that since the guns and the drugs and the gangs cut
24 across the city boundary lines and the State boundary
25 lines, this is something we need to deal with, if we can,

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1 on a national basis.

2 I welcome the additional police officers.
3 That's crucial to me. The one thing I could do tomorrow
4 that would help stop crime is to have more police officers
5 on the street and get them working with the neighborhood
6 groups, get them working with the church groups and the
7 neighborhood associations.

8 We need that. We need to deal with the root
9 causes and need to deal with more prisons and the whole
10 criminal justice system. But to me the immediate need is
11 to get more officers on the street. This bill has that.
12 It gives us the flexibility to do that, and that's
13 something Republicans have always stood for and I think
14 should stand for now.

15 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, it was interesting to hear
16 a Republican mayor say that the NRA was using fear-
17 mongering to stop this bill. Do you concur with that? Do
18 you see that going on?

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I haven't seen what's
20 been said to various people, but I think it's very
21 important that we stop the 30-second sound bites, that we
22 stop the slogans, and come to the reality of what is
23 needed in terms of the fight against crime. And there is
24 no reason in the world that I can think of to authorize
25 the sale of weapons that have no single purpose but to

1 kill people.

2 I think if we talk in terms of common sense and
3 what can make a difference, that is one factor, amongst
4 others, that I think can have a real impact.

5 QUESTION: Can you just tell us what you're
6 going to be doing? Are you going to be going up and
7 seeing these members of Congress in person?

8 MAYOR HELMKE: I've got to catch a flight back
9 to Fort Wayne. I did this on short notice. But I've been
10 making calls this morning and I plan to make some more
11 calls through the rest of the day and over the weekend,
12 too.

13 QUESTION: Attorney General Reno, one question
14 on another subject. The Justice Department supposedly has
15 filed a motion in the Shannon Faulkner case in South
16 Carolina. Can you confirm that that motion has in fact
17 been filed with the judge and what the Justice Department
18 is asking the judge to do in that case?

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I can make a copy of the
20 motion available to you. I understand that it has been
21 filed, on the issue of whether she should have to have her
22 head shaved.

23 QUESTION: Can you just state for us the Justice
24 Department's position on that?

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think it would be more

1 appropriate to let the motion speak for itself.

2 QUESTION: Can I ask you a quick question about
3 the anti-abortion campaign, the stepped-up campaign?
4 Could you tell us a little bit about last Saturday's
5 meeting with the anti-abortion activists, where it was
6 held, and did you participate? And are you investigating
7 particular groups? Do you believe that there's a
8 conspiracy?

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: With anti-abortion
10 activists?

11 QUESTION: Regarding the stepped-up campaign for
12 protecting abortion clinics.

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You said that I met with
14 anti-abortion activists?

15 QUESTION: No, I'm just asking could you tell us
16 about the meeting.

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: With whom?

18 QUESTION: With anti-abortion activists, that
19 was held last Saturday.

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know of any such
21 meeting.

22 QUESTION: You don't know of any meeting. Could
23 you tell us a little bit about your investigation at all?

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No. As you know, I
25 can't comment on pending investigations.

(End of press conference at 12:20 p.m.)

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