

1 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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SPEECH FOR UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS'
SECRETARIES SEMINAR

BY:
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
THE HONORABLE JANET RENO

GRAND HOTEL
GRAND BALLROOM
2350 M STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 1995
4:30 P.M.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 JANET RENO: Thank you so much. So many of you have
3 made me feel so very welcome in your offices. Judging by
4 how welcome, you have gone to a great deal of difficulty,
5 and I want to tell you how much I have appreciated it and
6 how much I have enjoyed the chance to visit with your
7 offices and to see people who are on the front line.

8 Those of you who have heard me understand my cardinal
9 principle of practicing law. My grandfather was a lawyer,
10 and he never made very much money. He was not very good
11 with his clients, he was not very organized, and so he
12 didn't do very well. But he did well enough to get his
13 children into college, at which point my grandmother went
14 down and took over his office. She got him organized. His
15 clients thought she was wonderful, and he started to make
16 money hand over feet.

17 [Laughter.]

18 MS. RENO: When I got sworn into the Florida Bar, she
19 told me that the single most important person involved in
20 my practice of law would be my secretary, and that I should
21 never forget it. I never have, and I am delighted to be
22 here today.

23 I just appreciate all that you do in your office day
24 in and day out, how you have a chance to be the glue that
25 keeps the office together, that gets things done, that works

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1 with Washington.

2 I think some of you have had the chance to meet Bessie
3 Meadows, who is my confidential assistant and a wonderful
4 person. It is so great to have you on the other end of the
5 phone being able to gauge, well, just how urgent is it. Can
6 we do it? Should we wait? Should I find, or should I not?
7 You really make it go so smoothly, and I am deeply grateful.

8 Carol tells me that there are a number of issues that
9 you would like to hear discussed that would be of interest
10 to you. I would like to try to address them. I think one
11 of the first questions is: What are the Department's
12 priorities? What is important to us?

13 Well, in the first place, I think it is important to
14 remember that each district is different, and that we can
15 establish priorities in Washington, but they have to be also
16 focused as well in the District because you understand your
17 needs and resources far better than we do.

18 In one area, it may be a particular problem; in another
19 area, the problem may be minimal. They may not have many
20 health care * institutions or much of a problem, and it is
21 not that important.

22 Considering that I don't like Washington coming to town
23 and telling people what to do, understand that we try to
24 develop a partnership in establishing priorities. Clearly,
25 one of the most important priorities for me is the whole

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1 issue of violent crime and terrorism..

2 Typically, or historically, U.S. Attorneys have not
3 been that involved in what might be considered to be local
4 domestic violence, local crime, local street crime. The
5 more you see of it, the more you see drug gangs crossing
6 districts, crossing jurisdictional lines.

7 You see juveniles coming from Denver, to Omaha, into
8 Wichita, committing a crime as they go. For the local
9 Wichita prosecutor to put it together, he gets one crime.
10 For the U.S. Attorney to put it together, you may be able
11 to put together a significant RICO prosecution that will get
12 us the time this offender deserves.

13 What we are trying to do is work in conjunction with
14 local government in a partnership. We don't want to take
15 violent crime cases to get credit for. We don't want to
16 take violent crime cases in any part of a turf battle.

17 We want to take those cases when it is in the best
18 interest of the case and there has been a common decision
19 made by the local prosecutor, the local law enforcement
20 officials, and the United States Attorney that it is in the
21 best interest to take the case into Federal Court.

22 That is why we have developed an Antiviolence
23 Initiative that is premised on the U.S. Attorney talking and
24 working with local law enforcement, local prosecutors to
25 develop an understanding of who can do what best and how we

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1 can assist. To that end, it is so important for me that the
2 federal investigative agencies share information with the
3 local investigators.

4 It was very frustrating sometimes as a prosecutor in
5 Miami, where I served for 15 years, to have the FBI come and
6 say, "We would like this information, this information, and
7 this information."

8 "Sure, we would be happy to help you. Here is what we
9 have. What else can we do?"

10 Then we would to go the FBI and ask for information and
11 it was, we discovered too often, a one-way street. It has
12 been so wonderful to see the FBI developing that partnership
13 and exchanging information, to see cases prosecuted, some
14 of the cases in federal court, but a significant number of
15 cases in state courts based on information that the DEA and
16 the FBI have been able to develop. It is that type of
17 cooperation that is so important.

18 To that end, it is very important to me that the
19 federal agencies cooperate amongst themselves. I swore when
20 I got there, that I would do everything I could to eliminate
21 turf battles, at least in the Justice Department agencies.
22 It is very gratifying to me to receive urgent notices from
23 the field describing a joint investigation of the FBI and
24 the United States Marshall Service and the local sheriff's
25 office and know that it is beginning to work. We have got

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1 more to do on that score, but I think we are making
2 progress.

3 Clearly, when we talk about violence, however, one of
4 the critical issues that we face is terrorism. Obviously,
5 this is a major commitment. The President in February
6 proposed legislation for foreign terrorism. We have now,
7 after the tragedy of Oklahoma City, responded with
8 additional proposals.

9 It looks like it is making its way through Congress,
10 giving both the investigative agencies and the
11 U.S. Attorney's Offices some additional resources and
12 additional tools to meet the crisis that this threat of
13 terrorism presents for the whole country. This is something
14 that we are going to continue to pursue as vigorously as
15 possible.

16 Another issue, and I think you may hear more of it,
17 because I heard it in my oversight hearing the other day,
18 is drug usage is up in the United States. It is because the
19 Administration has not emphasized drug enforcement, "And
20 what are you doing about it?"

21 What we have tried to do along that line is focus on
22 how we develop a comprehensive effort at drug enforcement.
23 When I came to Washington, I found a situation where we went
24 after kingpins in foreign countries and then discovered we
25 could not extradite the kingpin, and they sat down there

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1 continuing to make their billions,, whereas local law
2 enforcement was dealing with the problem of street drugs.

3
4 If you took the numbers 1 to 10, with "10" being the
5 kingpin, the local investigators would get maybe 1, 2, and
6 3. We might get 10, sitting off in Columbia, and maybe 9
7 and 8. But there was a whole middle ground of 6, 7, 8 that
8 was amorphous. You would get rid of one, and they would
9 just go attach themselves to somebody else.

10 What we have tried to do, again working with local law
11 enforcement, with the Bureau and DEA working together, is
12 develop a comprehensive initiative that continues an
13 enhanced focus on international trafficking aspects, but
14 then develops regional approaches.

15 On the Southwest Corridor, the five U.S. Attorneys
16 involved, and the FBI are working together. We have more
17 recently included Customs and INS in a comprehensive effort
18 to look at the regional aspects of it. New England has
19 another excellent regional operation underway, so that we
20 link with local law enforcement to make sure we get 1
21 through 10, whenever possible. This continues to be a
22 priority for this Department of Justice.

23 We also recognize that one of the reasons drug usage
24 is going up is it is amongst the very young, amongst school
25 children. It is going down amongst others. That is the

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1 reason we are trying so hard to save monies that were
2 destined for the Safe and Drug-Free School Zones and School
3 Act, to make sure that we continue to provide monies for
4 education, prevention, and treatment.

5 Organized crime continues to be an important priority
6 of the Department. Not just organized crime in its
7 traditional form of the LCN, but organized crime with its
8 Asian overtones and Asian aspects of organized crime and
9 Russian organized crime. We are trying to work together
10 again with all the agencies involved to take preventative
11 steps.

12 I think one of the things that we all have to
13 understand, and I don't care whether it is a large or small
14 district, one of the major concerns that we all have to
15 address is that crime is becoming international in scope and
16 consequence.

17 With high-speed transportation, with modern technology,
18 with modern communications, with modern ability to transfer
19 information back and forth, and transfer monies from bank
20 accounts everything we do has got to be considered in an
21 international sense. We have got to. It goes to a number
22 of issues in terms of discovery and prosecution, a number
23 of issues that we have to deal with, as we make sure that
24 we are linked together and focusing on organized crime in
25 an effective way.

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1 Civil rights enforcement is important to me, and it is
2 important to the department. I recently had occasion to
3 write to congressional leaders to explain again, and I think
4 it is important for us to understand -- and I think even in
5 the recent Supreme Court decisions providing for stricter
6 scrutiny of affirmative action programs that
7 Justice O'Connor in that opinion recognized and pointed that
8 there are still vestiges of historic discrimination in this
9 country that have got to be corrected.

10 There is still in this country discrimination, when
11 Secret Service agents are turned down at Denny's because of
12 their race in these past two years, you understand the
13 implications of what we face today. That is the reason it
14 is so important that we continue our efforts at civil rights
15 enforcement.

16 Now, historically, I think, that the Civil Rights
17 Division in Washington kind of said, "This is our business,
18 and U.S. Attorneys you can help in certain cases. I have
19 tried to stress that U.S. Attorneys know their community,
20 they know what is happening, they can react, they can use
21 the authority that they have in their community, and provide
22 a commitment across this land that is very important.

23 A number of your offices are responding, and responding
24 in a very effective way, in taking the lead in some
25 significant efforts in conjunction with the Civil Rights

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1 Division. That makes me very proud.

2 Environmental enforcement is very important to me. I
3 had occasion, and it has been one of the gratifying things
4 when we took a trip down the Miami River. It was my fifth
5 or sixth trip down the river by boat over a 20-year period.
6 I noticed how much more polluted it had become. I started
7 looking into why, and discovered sewage dumping into the
8 river and discovered a whole range of problems.

9 I contacted the U.S. Attorney's Office, because EPA was
10 involved. Recently, after I came to Washington -- I had to
11 be recused from the case -- we were successful in a major
12 settlement, and a very satisfactory settlement.

13 I look at it from the perspective of my home, and a
14 place I hold dear, in a river that I have known all of my
15 life. To see what had happened to that river made me come
16 to Washington, confirmed in the belief that we have to
17 continue to do everything we can to protect our air, our
18 land, and our waters.

19 Now, we are in a very tense moment in congressional
20 relations with Congress saying, "Well, we want to do away
21 with the Clean Water Act or this or that or the other." One
22 of the things that I think it is important for us to do is
23 to understand that environmental regulations and laws can
24 sometimes be very confusing to people, and that we all have
25 a responsibility to explain what is required so that people

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1 can comply and can comply in a straightforward and effective
2 manner without a lot of bureaucratic red tape.

3 The same thing is true with the Americans with
4 Disabilities Act. People say, "Oh, my goodness, I'm going
5 to have to change my whole building to comply with the Act,
6 and I'm going to get prosecuted if I don't." All the ADA
7 requires us to do is to take reasonable steps to provide
8 access to people for people with disabilities. You would
9 be amazed to see how easy it is to do it.

10 One of the things that we have all got to do, and I
11 suspect that many of you are the translators, we have got
12 to talk about the law in simple old words that people can
13 understand, not just the person that may be calling you
14 about child support, but the business executive that may be
15 talking to the Department of Justice about environmental
16 regulation.

17 Whether it be ADA or environmental regulation, we have
18 an important obligation to talk in terms that people can
19 understand and make compliance easily understood. Then, for
20 those people that continue to violate the law, let's go
21 after them in a vigorous, fair, firm manner. That is the
22 message that we are trying to convey.

23 One of the areas that I am proudest of in the
24 Department -- and since I've been a prosecutor most of my
25 life, it provides a new dimension for me that I haven't seen

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1 in a long time, since I was a civil litigator -- is the
2 civil work that the U.S. Attorneys do across the country.

3
4 I realize in the last 15 years there has been a far
5 greater emphasis on criminal prosecutions in some offices
6 than in civil cases, just because of the whole influence and
7 the impact of drug trafficking. Civil work is so very
8 important. I suspect there are a number here whose offices
9 I have visited to see your FLUs and your ACE Programs in
10 action. I am so proud of the work that you do. It is so
11 important. It is remarkable to see the figures. I don't
12 think we should be in the business of collecting money just
13 to pay for ourselves, but it shows you what a good FLU unit
14 can do in terms of paying for the office two and three times
15 over. It shows you what can be done when people develop
16 systems for collecting money, develop systems for civil
17 enforcement that can make a difference. I would urge you
18 to talk together about ideas and automation that can make
19 it more effective, but I just want to tell you how proud I
20 am of the job that so many of you do in that regard. One
21 area that I would like to touch on it is of concern to me
22 and concern to your bosses because they worry that I am
23 going to drown them in child support enforcement cases.

24 [Laughter.]

25 MS. RENO: As the chief prosecutor in Dade County, I

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1 handled child support enforcement. There is nothing more
2 frustrating. I recalled all my calls as State Attorney.
3 I answered the telephone. I had my telephone number listed.
4 I can still hold the telephone out like this (indicating),
5 and hear the woman screaming at me that it is all my fault
6 that she is not going to be able to pay the rent in the next
7 week.

8 But there is nothing more rewarding than to have people
9 stop you on the streets and say you helped my mom get my
10 child support, and I want to thank you. It is one of the
11 most important things that we can do.

12 This whole system that has been set up in the last 15
13 years focuses responsibility for child support enforcement
14 in state, 40 agencies that sometimes contract with local
15 prosecutors. That agency is primarily responsible, but
16 there are going to be cases such as the doctor who moves
17 from one state to another and does everything he can to
18 avoid child support. He needs to be prosecuted, because he
19 is just thumbing his nose at the whole system and ignoring
20 his children.

21 For the person who can't get a job, who is helpless,
22 that is not our case. But for the person who crosses state
23 lines, for the person who has the ability to pay, for the
24 person who thumbs their nose at the system and uses
25 interstate transportation, if you will, to avoid the

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1 obligation in one state, these are the people we should be
2 after. That should not overwhelm your office.

3 What we are trying to do is have the Department of
4 Health and Human Services look at the cases and understand
5 our screening standards and understand what cases should
6 come to the U.S. Attorneys and develop a procedure so that
7 we have an orderly way of doing it. I suspect, though, that
8 some of you may have gotten phone calls from somebody
9 hollering that, "The U.S. Attorney has jurisdiction. They
10 better do it, or I'm going to call Janet Reno."

11 [Laughter.]

12 MS. RENO: You tell them to call Janet Reno, and I will
13 try to explain to them the child support enforcement system.

14 My mother worked in he home. She built a house while
15 she worked in the home. She was there for us in the
16 afternoons and evenings, and she was a very important part
17 of our life.

18 It has been a great priority for me, both in Miami and
19 here, to do everything I can to make the Department of
20 Justice, and my office at home, an office that can give
21 people the opportunity to spend quality time with their
22 children, while at the same time meeting the financial
23 demands, achieving their professional goals.

24 Some people cringe when I start talking about it,
25 saying, "What can I do?"

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1 My answer is, "Look, with the technologies that we have
2 now -- if we can send a man to the moon, if we've got
3 computers and faxes and ways of doing things -- surely we
4 can develop systems in these next years that will permit
5 both parents to spend quality time with their children,
6 while at the same time meeting the demands, the financial
7 demands, placed on them.

8 Now, some bosses are better able than others to do it.
9 And there are some offices where everybody wants flextime.
10 But we are working with the Department Justice's Work-Life
11 Committee to really try to develop systems that can make the
12 workplace family friendly through flex time, through
13 telecommuting, through so many different means and
14 arrangements.

15 I am committed to doing everything I can to try to do
16 it, and do it more than we are doing it today. It is very
17 encouraging to me to see parents in a number of offices and
18 in main Justice that are achieving these goals.

19 One of the concerns for all of us in these days
20 following Oklahoma City is the security of our facilities.
21 Security programs which effectively protect the personnel
22 in the facilities of the United States Attorneys Offices,
23 and indeed of all Federal agencies, is essential to your
24 safety and to your peace of mind.

25 A district office security manager has been appointed

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1 in each United States Attorney's Office to manage these
2 security programs advise you on security matters. I would
3 urge you to contact that individual on any issue that you
4 might have. If you feel like there is a problem, obviously
5 talk with the United States Attorney. I think these are
6 issues that we continually have to address.

7 President Clinton has appointed me to chair an
8 interagency review of security at Federal facilities
9 throughout the country. We just presented to him our report
10 this past week. The United States Marshals Service worked
11 with the General Service Administration to develop a
12 meaningful survey. This survey has now been used as the
13 basis for a directive by the President for a compliance
14 base, and we are moving ahead with GSA to do what we can to
15 achieve this.

16 In an effort to improve security at United States
17 Attorneys Offices, a supplemental budget request to provide
18 visitor and mail screening equipment and guard services for
19 those offices which currently lack such protective measures
20 has been submitted, and I hope we will be granted sufficient
21 funds to do this. It looks good at this point, but we are
22 going to continue to push as hard as we can to ensure that.

23 One of the concerns I have, and I developed it in
24 Miami, because I would have prosecutors who were cross-
25 designated as Assistant United States Attorneys, and they

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1 would be over in the federal courthouse for three months,
2 and they would come back and I would say, "What is happening
3 to the case?"

4 "Well, we sent a cross-memo off a month ago, and it is
5 still up at main Justice." When they talked about "main
6 Justice," it was kind of them versus us.

7 Then I would go over and talk to the U.S. Attorney, and
8 he made it sound like "them versus us." I want to do
9 everything I can to avoid the "them versus us." I want to
10 work together, talk through problems, try to resolve things
11 so that it is not "them versus us."

12 I want to recognize that you and your offices are on
13 the front line. You have so many responsibilities in your
14 community. You know your community. We also have expertise
15 that you may not have. We also have an obligation to make
16 sure that where it is needed, that there is uniformity.

17 One of the areas, for example, and it will be a new
18 area -- it is not a new area, but it is going to be an
19 emerging area -- is the whole issue of the death penalty.
20 How we enforce the increased number of cases involving the
21 death penalty will be very important because if one district
22 is doing it one way and another district is doing it more
23 vigorously there are going to be cries of inequity in
24 enforcement.

25 There are many issues where we need to work together.

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1 We want to work with you, but not against you, in trying to
2 resolve these problems. That will mean, as some of you have
3 had, that the Attorney General and the U.S. Attorney will
4 be going back and forth on the telephone, trying a little
5 bit this way and trying a little bit that way.

6 One of the things that has impressed me so much is the
7 quality of the U.S. Attorneys. They are fine lawyers, they
8 are such committed public servants, and I have just enjoyed
9 working with every single one of them. Sometimes we have
10 to disagree, but I think they understand that I try to work
11 through the problems, talk with them, consult with them, and
12 make sure that their voice is heard in reaching an
13 appropriate solution.

14 We depend a great deal on the Attorney General's
15 Advisory Committee, of course chaired by Mary Jo White, who
16 is an invaluable support for me as I took office, and then
17 by Mike Styles.

18 The standard comment is, "Has the HEAC seen that yet?"
19 That is still a problem because sometimes they get it to the
20 HEAC, and somebody else hasn't heard about it. So, we are
21 continuing to try to do everything we can to make sure that
22 we have communicated.

23 To that end, Carol DeBatiste has just been absolutely
24 indispensable to our undertaking. I just want to publicly
25 thank you because you have made the communication so much

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1 easier.

2 What I would finally like to ask, and some of you have
3 heard me ask this in your office, but it is a question both
4 for now and for as long as I am in office: If you were the
5 Attorney General of the United States, what would you do to
6 improve your office, improve the Department of Justice's
7 response to your office and to do more to secure justice in
8 the United States? With that, I would like to ask you that
9 question?

10 A VOICE: I have taken a lot of those child support
11 phone calls. It is very frustrating to me when I hang up
12 the phone knowing I have not helped this woman. The reason
13 I could not help her was I would ask her, "Is your husband
14 in another state? Is the dollar amount so much?" I would
15 ask her these screening questions. Then I would say, "Now
16 you need to contact your Friend of the Court caseworker."
17 I know that that is where the problems is.

18 I hear over and over again, "I've tried to work with
19 them. They won't even return my phone calls. I can't even
20 get a person on the phone."

21 MS. RENO: That is what I dealt with at home, in Miami:
22 "Ms. Reno, you told me to call your Child Support unit, but
23 they haven't returned the call.

24 I would call over there: "Ms. Reno, I talked to her
25 day before yesterday, I talked to her four days ago. I

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1 talked to her. And I kept notes because I know what she is
2 doing."

3 I would say, "You just have to understand."

4 Then I would call the lady back and she would scream
5 at me for another 10 minutes, then she would start to cry,
6 and then she say, "Well, now I feel better. I understand
7 what you all are going through."

8 [Laughter.]

9 MS. RENO: That is what I think the U.S. Attorneys are
10 frightened of. I would be too. Somebody said, "Well, when
11 you go Washington, you won't have to have child support
12 enforcement calls." You can tell them I still get those
13 calls.

14 [Laughter.]

15 MS. RENO: It was interesting, they wrote a rap song
16 about it, collecting child support in Miami. It hit the top
17 of the charts in Florida for about three weeks, so I became
18 known for it. That is the hardest thing, and there is not
19 going to be any answer until we really improve the child
20 support enforcement system in this country.

21 Part of the problem is that the people in most of the
22 four D agencies, do not make very much money. They are
23 having to learning all sorts of new procedures constantly.
24 There is a turnover. They do not have the clout.

25 One of the advantages that I had was as an elected

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1 official in Miami I could provide clout, but there are many
2 agencies that are run by employees that don't have the clout
3 to get the job done.

4 I don't have any instant solutions for you, except to
5 say that we are fighting as hard as we can through welfare
6 reform and other initiatives. I will put it this way, I
7 want to make child support enforcement as effective as
8 Internal Revenue.

9 THE VOICE: Is it possible to maybe go around that
10 particular intake valve and do bypass surgery?

11 MS. RENO; Your problem is -- and which state are
12 you?

13 THE VOICE: Michigan.

14 MS. RENO: I don't know what the situation is in
15 Michigan. When I left Florida, there were some states that
16 if we had to deal with that state, we died because they
17 really weren't very far along, and there are other states
18 that are much further along. It is very hard to go around,
19 because you have got people waiting, I suspect, in lines at
20 every place trying to get it. It is frustrating, and I
21 don't have a ready answer for you.

22 [No response.]

23 MS. RENO: It can't be that perfect.

24 [Laughter.]

25 MS. HARRIS: Connie Harris from the Eastern District

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1 of Michigan. I have a question regarding young men and
2 women who are in the Armed Forces. I read an article in the
3 "Business Management," regarding basic skills as far as it
4 is hard for them to find a job once they get out of the
5 service. I was thinking if it is possible, could those
6 young men and women work in a Drug-Free Zone in the
7 different schools like elementary schools and the middle
8 school area?

MS. RENO: There is a what they
9 call Troops to Cops Program, where troops are being given
10 preference. Troops that are leaving the military as part
11 of the downsizing are being given preference. I don't have
12 all the details.

MS. HARRIS: I have read that information.

MS. RENO: What we are doing, we have now through the
14 President's Crime Bill in which he committed to put 100,000
15 police officers on the streets of America. Today, with an
16 announcement made today, we have now announced funding for
17 over 20,000 officers. A large number of those -- not a
18 large but a significant number are, I think, Troops to Cops'
19 hires, and that is giving them an opportunity to do just
20 that.
21

22 One of the problems with the whole downsizing and with
23 the budget cutting that is going on in Washington, good
24 constructive programs that would provide afternoon and
25 evening monitoring and school monitoring and DARE-type

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1 programs are being cut as well. We are fighting very hard
2 to keep those. But I am told by the police chiefs that have
3 used the Troops to Cops that it is really producing some
4 great results. These people have the discipline; they have
5 the training; and they know how to relate to kids.

6 If you would check with, I don't know who has the most
7 information, but I think there is a whole initiative
8 underway to make sure that -- we are also going to face the
9 problem with federal agencies here in Washington and around
10 the country. We are going to have to cut 272,000 people.
11

12 It is hard for us to realize in the Department, because
13 this department is the only one that is growing. We are
14 sitting there not looking at cuts, or drastic cuts, and
15 everybody else is. I mean, the two departments that share
16 our Appropriations Subcommittee are Commerce and State, and
17 I think Commerce is being eliminated in the House proposal
18 and State is being cut by about 20 percent. There are an
19 awful lot of programs that we need to focus on to get people
20 jobs, and constructive jobs.

21 Thank you for all that you do for the people of your
22 community and of this Nation. It is just a real privilege
23 and pleasure for me to have the chance to work with you.

24 (Whereupon, at 5:05 p.m., the speech was concluded.)

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