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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE  
HONORABLE JANET RENO,  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

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Room 5111  
Department of Justice  
9th and Constitution, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
Thursday, October 2, 1997

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P R O C E E D I N G S

[9:31 a.m.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Good morning. How are you.

Today we have more good news in the fight against juvenile crime. Last summer I reported that the juvenile arrest rate for violent crime had gone down 2.9 percent between 1994 and 1995. That was the first decline in 7 years. I've worried since that it might be a blip. But now the 1996 Uniform Crime Report that will be released in the next few weeks shows we are making real progress in fighting youth crime.

As you can see from this chart, the juvenile violent crime arrest rate decreased 9.2 percent in 1996,

15 making the aggregate drop in juvenile violent crime  
16 arrests 11.9 percent since 1994. This drop I think is  
17 real now. I don't think we can talk about it as a blip.  
18 It stems from many factors. The President's crime plan  
19 has provided more money and tougher laws. Communities  
20 across America, their police, their prosecutors, mentors  
21 in the community, and young people themselves are working  
22 harder than ever to keep young people on the right track,  
23 to give them opportunity, and to provide punishment and  
24 intervention when they stray.

25           Wherever I travel, I see young people working to

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1 keep their friends and their peers from turning to  
2 violence. I see young people coming to Washington for  
3 Close-Up programs and other programs, and I see them  
4 wanting to be involved and to make a difference. I think  
5 they are.

6           For these reasons, we have made progress. Now  
7 we have to make it stick. Juvenile arrest rates are still  
8 too high. We still continue to hear of too many serious  
9 violent crimes committed by young people, and if we are  
10 not vigilant they will go back up again, for, as we all  
11 know, the juvenile population will rise in the next  
12 decade.

13           We must hold juveniles accountable, but we must  
14 also invest in the children who we know are at risk of  
15 becoming delinquents, so that they may have the tools to  
16 succeed and the will to reject drugs and gangs and guns  
17 and other destructive behavior. The President and I have  
18 been working with Congress to try to secure passage of a  
19 juvenile justice bill that maintains this balance. I  
20 think the decrease in juvenile violent arrests we are  
21 seeing today underscores the need for a real balance. A  
22 policy that punishes children who do wrong without  
23 investing to help children do right will only buy us a  
24 little time before youth violence increases again.

25           We know that good after-school programs can

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1 safely and constructively occupy children in the hours  
2 that they are unsupervised and otherwise likely to get  
3 into trouble. Just a few weeks ago, a report reiterated

4 what we have known for some time, that juvenile crime  
5 peaks in the hours immediately after school and that good  
6 after-school programs are critical to cutting youth crime.  
7 I urge Congress to make after-school programs a priority  
8 in its funding decisions.

9 I'm gratified that appropriators in the House  
10 and the Senate have made juvenile crime prevention and  
11 intervention a priority. With the right resources and  
12 smart, productive partnerships between the Federal  
13 Government, States and local communities, I hope we can  
14 continue to report good news to you on this issue for  
15 years to come.

16 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, last year I think we got  
17 violent crime arrest data and also arrest data for youth  
18 murders. How has the youth murder rate been going?

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have not seen those  
20 figures. I'll ask Burt to furnish those as soon as we  
21 can.

22 QUESTION: Do you have any way of assessing how  
23 the trend toward punishing violent juveniles as adults,  
24 which is an increasing trend in States, do you have any  
25 way of assessing how that plays into these declining

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1 numbers?

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't think there's  
3 any way we can quantify the contribution made by any one  
4 factor. I think we've got to be very careful as we look  
5 at what happens when we transfer a youngster to the adult  
6 court, and it is important that we understand that it is  
7 not just the punishment, but what happens to that  
8 youngster when they get back to the community, that is  
9 going to make a difference.

10 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, if you can't really  
11 quantify the impact of any one factor, can you take credit  
12 for this? Or is it the economy or --

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: If you've noticed, I  
14 don't try to take credit. I try to find solutions and try  
15 to figure out, okay, this isn't working, this program has  
16 been evaluated, it's not working, it's not having an  
17 impact. And I try to operate in all instances based on  
18 common sense, that we've got to make punishment mean what  
19 it says, that the punishment's got to fit the crime, but

20 that we've got to recognize that when you follow up after  
21 the youngster comes back to the community by simply  
22 turning them back to the apartment over the open air drug  
23 market where they got into trouble in the first place,  
24 that's not going to work.

25 So it's common sense, it's the mentor, that's

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1 making a difference. I think the COPS program has made a  
2 difference.

3 In terms of me taking credit for something, I  
4 just try to figure out what works and what doesn't work  
5 and promote it in every way that I can.

6 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, the numbers may be going  
7 down, but there are just three cases alone this week: the  
8 school murders yesterday in Mississippi, the murder of a  
9 businessman in New Jersey, and the murder of a kid selling  
10 candy door to door. It paints a picture more of an  
11 epidemic than of a situation that's improving.

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think that you have  
13 just done me a very great service because, as I pointed  
14 out, we cannot be satisfied by this reduction in youth  
15 violence or the indicators that there is a reduction in  
16 youth violence. One crime committed by a 16 year old, one  
17 crime of violence, is one crime too many.

18 But I think it's important that as you report  
19 it, you report it in the larger context, because what you  
20 all do tend to do sometimes is to report only the bad and  
21 not the good. By reminding people that youth violence  
22 continues, and yet by looking at this, I think we can take  
23 heart from the fact that there are things working, that  
24 we've got to renew our efforts, that we've got to make  
25 sure we balance prevention with punishment, that we make

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1 an investment in our children, an investment in  
2 supervision, in programs that work. I think we can make a  
3 difference.

4 So thank you for indicating that it's still very  
5 important, and let's take heart from these figures.

6 QUESTION: General Reno, you mentioned that the  
7 youth population is expected to go up in the next decade.  
8 How much of this could be a reflection of the fact that

9 it's still going down, that is the youth cohort?

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Ron, what I'd like to  
11 do, because the figures that I've seen indicate that the  
12 number of young people in the age category 12 through and  
13 including 17 went down through about '92 or '93 -- I think  
14 it has started up. But I will ask Burt to get with the  
15 best statisticians and confirm those figures and compare  
16 with what you may have.

17 QUESTION: General Reno, on another matter, are  
18 you going to have a decision today on whether to extend  
19 the review of Vice President Gore another 60 to 90 days?

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know when I will  
21 make the decision, but I will make it after I have been  
22 fully informed and considered all the facts and the law.

23 QUESTION: Have you been fully informed by the  
24 task force so far?

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I am asking questions as

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1 I go.

2 QUESTION: Have they made a recommendation to  
3 you?

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment.

5 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, given the complexity of the  
6 case, isn't it quite likely that you'll need more time?

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't do what-if's  
8 until I get to where I have to make a decision.

9 QUESTION: Well, you're 24 hours -- but you're  
10 24 hours from it, so it's not much of an "if" any more.

11 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think it's important  
12 that we not speculate. I know that you've been asking  
13 questions all week, but I think the time has come for us  
14 to just continue the review and make the decision, and  
15 I'll do that.

16 QUESTION: You don't want to put us out of our  
17 misery?

18 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It's not your misery.

19 QUESTION: Is it yours?

20 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, along the same vein -- and  
21 I hope this is in a form that you can answer; I realize  
22 that many of these you cannot answer -- has the 30-day  
23 review settled all the legal questions surrounding this  
24 particular law?

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, I would not

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1 comment in terms of where we're at.

2 QUESTION: Just a question about the law. If  
3 you -- once you reach this point, how does it apply in  
4 terms of the difference between a felony and a  
5 misdemeanor? In other words, if there has to be a  
6 determination that -- can you go forward to the  
7 independent counsel if there's a determination that under  
8 prior practices it would just be a misdemeanor charge?

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I again won't comment on  
10 the whole process.

11 QUESTION: What about the response that you also  
12 have to make tomorrow to Chairman Hyde? Do you expect to  
13 be letting him know that you are in fact commencing a 30-  
14 day inquiry into any of the issues that he's raised in his  
15 letter?

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We will let the letter  
17 speak for itself.

18 QUESTION: Is it going to be as detailed as the  
19 letter that you wrote to both chairmen back in April?

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We'll let the letter  
21 speak for itself.

22 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, do you expect to do that  
23 letter Friday or Monday?

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
25 the timing.

10

1 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, there's a big story in the  
2 New York Times today about the Democratic Party giving  
3 some money to -- taking some money and giving it to the  
4 States as soft money and using this to circumvent,  
5 possibly, limitations on how much can be spent in a  
6 campaign. Is that a subject that the task force is  
7 looking at?

8 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Yes, it is.

9 QUESTION: Has been for some time?

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I referred it some time  
11 ago.

12 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, back in October when Common  
13 Cause first brought this to you, the facts that are laid

14 out in the New York Times story, they asked you at that  
15 time to seek the appointment of an independent counsel  
16 since the President was so deeply involved in developing  
17 the very strategy that the New York Times is talking  
18 about.

19 Has anything about those facts changed your view  
20 on whether a 30-day inquiry is needed in this set of facts  
21 as laid out by the New York Times today?

22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment.

23 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, also, way down in that  
24 story, not too far down, there's about two lines that says  
25 the Republican National Committee did the same thing. You

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1 just said you were investigating the Democratic National  
2 Committee on this possible activity. Are you  
3 investigating the Republican National Committee for the  
4 same thing?

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment.

6 QUESTION: Can you answer a question about the  
7 way the independent counsel law works? We all know that -  
8 - I think you told us, as a matter of fact, last week --  
9 that as far as anyone can tell there's never been a  
10 prosecution under the Thayer Act -- not the Thayer Act;  
11 the Pendleton Act -- for telephone solicitation. And we  
12 also know that the independent counsel says that you have  
13 to factor in whether this law has ever been used in the  
14 past.

15 Why isn't the fact that it's never been used  
16 before not a show-stopper?

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, these are all  
18 issues that I should consider and am in the process of  
19 considering and will comment as appropriate.

20 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, others have referred to the  
21 Pendleton Act as being constitutionally vague, that the  
22 law is silent on many of the issues that you need to look  
23 at. If that's the case, how difficult is it for you, how  
24 difficult is it for the task force to apply the facts to  
25 the law?

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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I think we are in the  
2 process of doing that. I would not comment on the

3 difficulty, other than the comment that I made last week  
4 that it is a difficult decision.

5 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, back to the question of the  
6 transferring of soft money from the Democratic Party  
7 through the States for use in advertisements by both the  
8 Clinton and Gore supporters. This is something that  
9 you've been looking at, the Justice Department's been  
10 looking at, for almost a year, and the facts are there.  
11 They're in public records. The statements by Dick Morris  
12 and other participants in the meeting have been on the  
13 record for some time.

14 Why, I guess, is this not resolved as a legal  
15 question yet, that is whether these actions were legal or  
16 not legal?

17 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would comment.

18 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, just to follow up on this,  
19 was this issue taken up -- I've lost track of all the 30-  
20 day reviews you've done in response to various letters.  
21 But it's my recollection that some of these issues were  
22 raised last winter and spring in some of the letters that  
23 you responded to with 30-day reviews.

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I haven't looked at the  
25 letters in some time. I'll ask Burt to give you whatever

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1 the time -- pull the letters and confirm the time.

2 QUESTION: But do you know if you've at some  
3 point examined this specific set of events to determine  
4 whether there was information to trigger an independent  
5 counsel process?

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, I would not  
7 comment.

8 QUESTION: Would you say that this latest  
9 infusion of resources, additional staffing that you've  
10 provided to the task force in the last few weeks, has  
11 allowed them to focus more attention on the spending side  
12 as opposed to the collection side of the Democratic  
13 fundraising? Or is there any way you can characterize any  
14 change as a result of the additional manpower?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
16 how any of the investigative or prosecutive resources are  
17 being used.

18 QUESTION: General Reno, I think one of the

19 reasons that so many people have raised questions about  
20 the conduct of this investigation is not so much dealing  
21 with the President and the Vice President, but the fact  
22 that there have been some major identifiable figures who  
23 have clearly committed some questionable acts and no  
24 action has been taken against them.

25 I wonder if you can say whether the task force

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1 is closing in on any kind of major action against some of  
2 the people involved in this?

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of the points that a  
4 prosecutor faces is how you conduct an investigation in an  
5 orderly way, that builds on one fact and then on another,  
6 with the recognition that the ultimate goal, if wrongdoing  
7 has been done, is to file charges, but, more importantly,  
8 to get a conviction.

9 You don't get a conviction by doing things  
10 hastily or in an order that does not lead to the solidest  
11 case possible. I've never ever done things based on the  
12 timing of a newspaper reporter's suggestion as to how an  
13 investigation should be conducted, because it would lead  
14 to real trouble, since I think your goal is more "What can  
15 I do for a headline?" than "What can I do to build a case  
16 that will secure a conviction that will last through  
17 appeal?"

18 QUESTION: The impression was that you shook up  
19 your team on this because you yourself were not satisfied  
20 with the pace of things.

21 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I indicated  
22 previously, what I have done is try to address all of the  
23 issues, to make sure they have the resources to build as  
24 much as I possibly can in an orderly way.

25 QUESTION: Well, from your review of this issue,

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1 would you favor or would you support some kind of  
2 legislation that would restrict top-level U.S. Government  
3 officials from participating in campaign fundraising,  
4 insulate them from the corruptions of this kind of  
5 activity?

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't think it's  
7 appropriate for me to comment on legislation in this

8 context.

9 QUESTION: Is it fair to say that one of the  
10 things you are looking at is whether, in terms of  
11 evaluating what Hyde has asked you to look at, one of the  
12 things you are looking at is whether or not you feel you  
13 have a conflict of interest in pursuing this investigation  
14 at the Justice Department?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: That has always been one  
16 of the issues.

17 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, a question not designed to  
18 generate a headline: What venues does the law provide for  
19 somebody's who's the subject of a 30-day investigation to  
20 be in contact with the Justice Department, or a 30-day  
21 review?

22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What our policy has been  
23 is to always be willing to hear from people who have  
24 information or want to be heard if they are the subject of  
25 an inquiry.

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1 QUESTION: Have the Vice President's lawyers  
2 contacted the Department during this 30 days?

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
4 how the investigation has been conducted or what has been  
5 done in the process.

6 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, in an effort to build a  
7 headline here --

8 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: You?

9 [Laughter.]

10 QUESTION: -- Speaker Gingrich on the White  
11 House lawn suggested that you should just forego this 90-  
12 day preliminary investigation and go after an independent  
13 counsel. Can you even do that under the independent  
14 counsel law? Does he really know what he's talking about?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, I didn't quite  
16 hear what the Speaker had suggested, so I really could not  
17 comment. But what I am trying to do is to apply the Act,  
18 make sure that I review everything as carefully as  
19 possible, consider all issues. And I will take whatever  
20 time I have to do that.

21 QUESTION: Regardless of what Speaker Gingrich  
22 said, then, under the law can you ignore the 90-day  
23 preliminary investigation and seek an independent counsel?

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, it would depend  
25 on the facts and the circumstances.

17

1 QUESTION: So it's possible?

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: It is possible.

3 QUESTION: When you say you're going to take the  
4 time necessary, does that mean you're going to go right up  
5 to the deadline in each step of the process?

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: If I don't need the full  
7 time, I won't do it.

8 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, there has also been a  
9 suggestion in the last couple of weeks or so -- I guess  
10 this is one that comes up from time to time -- people  
11 saying, why don't we just spare ourselves the agony of  
12 going through this "will she or won't she" on the  
13 independent counsel question and just have a special  
14 prosecutor. You've probably seen those columns.

15 What about that?

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: All these points are  
17 raised. People stop me, call me, write me, say, well, did  
18 you see so-and-so's column, what are you going to do about  
19 that? And I, as I've said before, try to take everybody's  
20 suggestions and consider them, and then I'm going to try  
21 to do what I think's right.

22 QUESTION: Well, I've been under the impression  
23 that you had kind of ruled out the idea of a special  
24 prosecutor.

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Well, one of the points

18

1 that I have made in the past is that, after I appointed  
2 Mr. Fiske in the original Whitewater investigation I was  
3 criticized because -- or it was suggested that he was not  
4 independent because I had appointed him.

5 QUESTION: So is that still a remote --

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of the issues that  
7 you've got to consider in this whole process is that I  
8 continue to get comments about independent counsel,  
9 because I ultimately have -- I'm the only one that can  
10 remove them. The special division of the court can  
11 appoint them, but then I can remove them. So in that  
12 instance they are ultimately not -- it could be argued

13 that they are not independent.

14 There are no precise lines, and that again is  
15 part of the equation that we consider as we try to figure  
16 out what's the right thing to do.

17 QUESTION: Some people have suggested that the  
18 way you've brought Mr. LaBella in is tantamount to putting  
19 him in the place of one of your special counsels. Do you  
20 agree with that?

21 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No. Mr. LaBella is an  
22 assistant United States attorney and a Justice Department  
23 lawyer of long experience and, as I said last week, what  
24 I'm trying to do is rely on the resources of the Criminal  
25 Division, the Public Integrity Section, and, as additional

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1 resources are needed, do as we did with the OKBOMB  
2 investigation and prosecution and rely on the resources of  
3 the Department.

4 QUESTION: In terms of letting us know when you  
5 have resolved one of the many legal issues that are out  
6 there, the fundamental issue of how the Democratic Party  
7 used its money in the primary is the issue of whether  
8 these were ads, candidate ads, not issue ads but candidate  
9 ads for President Clinton or for Bob Dole. Have you  
10 resolved that legal question of whether these were  
11 candidate ads?

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, one of the points  
13 that I have tried to make in this whole thing is I'm not  
14 going to discuss how we proceed with the investigation or  
15 the decisions made until we reach ultimate conclusions.

16 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, the 30-day review on the  
17 Vice President's phone calls ends tomorrow. The 30-day  
18 review on the President's phone calls ends around October  
19 15th. Isn't it logical that whatever decision you make  
20 tomorrow will apply to White House phone calls in general  
21 and not to just the Vice President's phone calls?

22 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't do what-if's. I  
23 haven't made the decision yet.

24 QUESTION: I mean, in the context of right this  
25 moment isn't it logical that whatever decision it will be,

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1 it will apply to both?

2 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: In each instance you  
3 have to look at the evidence. The evidence is being  
4 developed. You have to look at the law. And the  
5 decisions when they are finally made will speak for  
6 themselves.

7 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, on the Hyde letter, you  
8 said you wouldn't comment on the timing. Yet there's no  
9 wiggle room, is there? I mean, it too is due tomorrow.

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: My understanding is that  
11 it is due tomorrow, but the suggestion was made that it  
12 might be due Monday. My understanding is that it is due  
13 tomorrow.

14 QUESTION: And you intend to meet that deadline?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I always try to meet my  
16 deadlines.

17 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, is the Justice Department  
18 investigating Anhaueser Busch on antitrust grounds?

19 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I refer you to the  
20 Antitrust Division for whatever comment that they would  
21 make that is appropriate.

22 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, can we take from the time  
23 and care that you've gone about considering independent  
24 counsel --

25 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Can you speak just a

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1 little bit louder, please?

2 QUESTION: Sure.

3 Can we take or should we take from the time and  
4 the care that you've gone about this consideration of  
5 independent counsel that you have some lack of confidence  
6 in how the independent counsel statute is working now?

7 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I have tried to take  
8 time and care and considerable time and care in every  
9 instance in which I have considered whether an independent  
10 counsel should be sought or not.

11 QUESTION: But it doesn't reflect any lack of  
12 confidence in how the statute works?

13 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: As I have indicated, I  
14 think it is inappropriate for me to comment on the statute  
15 itself. I'm obligated to, and it is my duty to, implement  
16 it correctly. I have said that when I'm through with this  
17 process I might have -- be in the best position to comment

18 on how the statute works and how it could be improved.

19 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, I have another process  
20 question. Everybody is acting as if there's one  
21 recommendation that's going to be given to you. Are you  
22 indeed going to get one recommendation speaking in one  
23 voice from the task force? Are you going to be given a  
24 list of options? Are you going to be shown both sides of  
25 the question?

22

1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Again, I'm not going to  
2 discuss how we do things.

3 QUESTION: Did you ever paddle a canoe upstream,  
4 General Reno?

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Yes, with great  
6 difficulty. I've also turned over once recently.

7 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, you said that it could be  
8 argued that the three-judge panel, it could be argued that  
9 they're not independent.

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No, no, that was not the  
11 point that I made. Under the independent counsel statute,  
12 I petition the court for the appointment of an independent  
13 counsel pursuant to the statute. The court appoints. But  
14 under the statute I'm the only one who can remove. And so  
15 my point was that some people could argue, as they argued  
16 that Fiske was not independent because I appointed him,  
17 they could argue that the independent counsel is not  
18 independent because I can remove him.

19 QUESTION: Well, I didn't mean to put words in  
20 your mouth, so let me make the suggestion then that, while  
21 certainly some people would object that the three-judge  
22 panel that makes the appointment, that while that will be  
23 out of your hands, that they might not necessarily be --  
24 the part of the process that makes them select the  
25 independent counsel, that they might not be the most

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1 independent or objective people to make the ultimate  
2 decision. Does that weigh in any way on your course of  
3 action?

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not discuss the  
5 factors that go into my decisionmaking.

6 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, have you given any

7 consideration to removing anybody who's serving as an  
8 independent counsel?

9 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I do not have anything  
10 under consideration in that regard. Again, there have  
11 been press comments or press stories indicating that  
12 people have sought to have me exercise that authority.

13 QUESTION: But you're not considering doing that  
14 at this time?

15 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: No, I'm not.

16 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, if I could change the  
17 subject to Mr. Freeh's comments yesterday. Do you agree  
18 with the Director that Russian organized crime, the  
19 Russian mafia -- that the crime problem presented is  
20 really immense, not only in Russia but also with the 30  
21 crime families in this country? Do you share his  
22 sentiments?

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: With respect to Russian  
24 organized crime, I think it is an issue that law  
25 enforcement is facing around the world. I think it is

24

1 important that we work together with our allies, with the  
2 Russian Government, in every way we can.

3 QUESTION: He said also that he took very  
4 seriously the possibility, as also was expressed by  
5 William Webster this week in the release of a report on  
6 the Russian mafia, of the possibility of nuclear weapons  
7 falling into the hands of Russian criminal gangs. I  
8 understand also from a Post report earlier this week that  
9 the Russian mafia and the drug cartels of Colombia and  
10 probably Mexico are connected in transferring weapons,  
11 drugs, money.

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
13 the latter article other than to say that we constantly  
14 review all our information in terms of trying to  
15 understand what new patterns might be developing and how  
16 we can best use the resources of the Federal Government  
17 with appropriate assistance from the military in terms of  
18 interdiction in the Caribbean, and we will continue to do  
19 that.

20 QUESTION: Finally, Mr. Yablokov, formerly of  
21 the Yeltsin administration, will testify in the Congress  
22 today to the Weldon committee about the very real

23 likelihood that these small, one-kiloton suitcase-type  
24 nuclear demolition things we've been talking about for  
25 some months did actually exist, were manufactured, and in

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1 the hands of the KGB. Are you aware of Mr. Yablokov or  
2 would you be interested in his witness?

3 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: My understanding is that  
4 he's not testified yet. So when he does I will look  
5 forward to hearing what he might say.

6 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, could you tell us something  
7 about how the Vice President will learn about your  
8 decision? Will you tell him? Will your office tell him  
9 tomorrow?

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Whatever decision is  
11 made will be conveyed as appropriate, through whatever  
12 channels are appropriate.

13 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, on the Oklahoma City  
14 bombing case. Your feelings about the death penalty in  
15 that case, should we take from that that you would not be  
16 satisfied with anything less than a death penalty in this  
17 case?

18 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment at  
19 this stage of the proceedings.

20 QUESTION: Might you make the decision on  
21 proceeding with the 90-day investigation on Vice President  
22 Gore today?

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know when I'm  
24 going to make the decision, except I'm going to make it  
25 within the time limits of the statute.

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1 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, can you explain to, like,  
2 an average citizen if there's a different standard that's  
3 used in investigating the President or the Vice President,  
4 as opposed to a Cabinet member?

5 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I don't know of any  
6 different standard.

7 QUESTION: Ms. Reno, one of the things that has  
8 been pointed out by various columnists over the last week  
9 is that a 90-day preliminary investigation is not a  
10 conviction. It's not even on the front doorstep of a  
11 conviction.

12 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Bravo for you all  
13 pointing it out.

14 QUESTION: I mean, is it possible that we're  
15 overreacting to this whole development?

16 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I would not comment on  
17 whether anyone is overreacting or not. But I would  
18 comment -- and just put yourself in the shoes of somebody  
19 who -- let's say somebody identified you as participating  
20 in a bank robbery, but it really wasn't -- they didn't  
21 really identify you. They just put this piece together  
22 with this piece and they said: He must have done it. And  
23 you didn't do it and you were totally innocent.

24 It is very important for the person that has the  
25 responsibility for pursuing investigations and determining

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1 whether the evidence is sufficient to prosecute or  
2 sufficient to trigger the independent counsel statute,  
3 that we do it with regards to protecting everyone involved  
4 from a wrong decision, from a decision that is not based  
5 on the evidence and the law.

6 For as long as I have been a prosecutor, I have  
7 tried to do my level best to make sure that I work through  
8 all the statements, find out what's true, what's not true,  
9 how the law should be applied, and then make a decision.  
10 I think it is very interesting to see how the media in  
11 these last several weeks is looking at the issue and I  
12 think recognizing that we have got to be very careful. We  
13 must not prejudge. We must seek the truth and we must  
14 apply the truth as the law dictates.

15 QUESTION: Let me ask you this. Does it weigh  
16 on your mind that the mere appointment of an independent  
17 counsel can often politically have the consequence of  
18 judging that person who's the subject of the independent  
19 counsel investigation guilty in the eyes of many people  
20 and can have damaging consequences?

21 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: What I try to do is  
22 follow the law. Whether you seek the appointment of an  
23 independent counsel or even announce that you're  
24 investigating, or if you file charges, all of those have  
25 an impact, whether it be on an officeholder or on the

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1 average citizen.

2 A kid 18 years old wrongfully charged with a  
3 crime, that has a terrible impact on his life. And  
4 whether you're dealing with an officeholder or dealing  
5 with just an average citizen, what we do has such an  
6 impact and it is so important that we do it right. I'm  
7 going to continue to try my level best to see that we do  
8 it the right way.

9 Thank you.

10 [End of press conference at 10:02 a.m.]

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