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BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Statement of Comprehensive Strategy for Youth

Family and Community

By

United States Attorney General

Janet Reno

North Park Community Center

4044 Idaho Street

San Diego, California

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MS. RENO: Thank you so very much, Ron Roberts, and

Sandy, Chief Sanders, Judge Milliken, all of you who have taken today to spend with me and show me what a community can do. San Diego has done it again. I have been here before on law enforcement and border issues where I stood with sheriff -- the sheriff, the chief, the mayor, people of different parties, the district attorney, a man of different party, Alan Bersin, but we were here together -- Federal and local interests -- dedicated to doing something to make a difference, and there is no community that can match San Diego for doing just that, and you have done it again with the implementation of this comprehensive strategy.

This comprehensive strategy was developed -- the idea of it was developed a long time ago as I tried to figure out what to do about crack-involved infants and their mothers as a prosecutor in Dade County, Florida.

The doctors taught me that 50 percent of all learned human response was learned in the first year of life, that the concept of reward and punishment and a conscience was developed during the first three years of life, and I suddenly said to myself, "What good are you going to be as a prosecutor and what good will all the jails be 15 years from now if that child does

not understand what punishment means and has no conscience?"

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I then looked at the continuity of a child's life

and said, "What good are all the early intervention programs going to be and the early childhood programs if the child is not supervised after school and in the evenings where it can truly make a difference?"

So, we set about with the Juvenile Justice Council

in developing the comprehensive strategy to serve as a road map, if you will, but with the clear recognition that

communities had to address their needs and resources because you understand it better, that the state could be a great

partner, and it's a privilege to have the chance to meet the

senator and Assemblywoman Davis -- that the Federal government could be a partner -- not coming to town to tell you what to do, but to ask how we can work together to forge a partnership.

You have done it.

The business sector has been here this morning, law

enforcement, the schools, private citizens who just care

deeply, and agencies have talked to me about how they are so

much more effective now because they've got all these contacts that now suddenly understand what services that agency can deliver.

But I want to tell you something. They make it sound so easy. It is far easier said than done. And the hours that have gone into this -- sometimes frustrating hours where people sit and talk and never get anything done, and then to see this

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forged as a really common effort is just exciting. It's exciting for me because I can now go to other communities around the nation and say, "Look, you say you can't do it because you're too diverse. You say you can't do it because you have this problem or that problem. Let me show you a community that has done it: San Diego. Talk to them. See what they can do. See what they have done in partnership with the State of California." You are leading the way.

You've shown what can be done if you analyze the problem rather than just kind of wade in, trying a little bit here and a little bit there. With juvenile female crime, you'll be able to focus priorities and get to the bottom of it.

I hope that you will pursue your plan to evaluate programs and get rid of what doesn't work and move ahead with what does work.

Most of all, you have shown what can be done when we think about the economics of the effort.

Three dollars invested in prenatal care will save a lot of dollars down the road. Dollars invested in after-school programs are going to save so much.

Home programs, rather than detention facilities, are going to save dollars, and you're showing the people of San Diego the dollars that can be saved. It is exciting.

You're reaching out to parents. I listened to an eloquent parent advocate this morning talk about how much she

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had learned in the process of engaging in a program that you have helped to sponsor.

But most of all, you have shown something very special, that young people are great; they want so to make a contribution; they want so to be somebody and help out in the community, and if given half a fighting chance, they will do just that.

You have involved the youth of San Diego, and you have listened to them in the structuring of this effort. I have heard these young people this morning, and they are really just splendid. I heard others at another program, and they are just splendid.

(Applause.)

I think you're looking at a future governor of California and some other people over there. But keep listening to them. They understand.

When I talk to young people, they tell me that there are two things they need to keep out of trouble: something to do in the afternoon, evening and non-school hours, a variety of programs that can meet a variety of needs with an opportunity to serve others, and the other thing they need is some adult to talk to, somebody who knows how hard it is to grow up in America today, somebody who treats them with respect, gives them a pat on the back when they deserve it and tells them when they're wrong in a firm but non-demeaning way.

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You all have led the way in showing the strength of the youth

of America and what they can do when involved in an effort like this.

At an earlier meeting today, I asked one young lady why the program worked, and she looked off into space, and then she turned with a great smile on her face and said, "Because they actually care." San Diego actually cares, and it shows.

I salute you, and I take this report now to the rest of the nation to show that, because you care, because you believe in the youth of America and of San Diego, we can have a substantial impact on the culture of violence in America.

We must say to ourselves, "Yes, crime is down," and juvenile crime is down, but we can't become complacent. We're going to have to continue the effort in every way that we can, bolstering what Judge Milliken is doing in juvenile justice, making sure that there is punishment that fits the crime, making sure that there is after-care and follow-up, making sure that we care.

And if we do it child by child, youth by youth, we can come into the next century with a nation much less violent, much more caring, and much, much stronger. Thank you all for

leading the way.

(Applause.)

(Proceedings in the above-entitled matter were
concluded.)