



**WEEKLY MEDIA AVAILABILITY WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
AND**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE DIRECTOR JEREMY TRAVIS

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

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ATTY GEN. RENO: For seven years now, we have seen crime

rates drop across the country. Our communities are safer. But we can't become complacent. If we continue our efforts, I think we can have a substantial impact on violence and make it permanent.

There are now 1.3 million state and federal offenders in our nation's prisons. As many as 500,000 individuals will leave prison annually and return to their communities throughout the nation. What can we do to protect our communities through efforts to make sure that these returning offenders do not commit further crime and return to prison as part of a revolving door?

We want to work with state and federal prison officials, the courts and communities to improve supervision of this high-risk population by developing a seamless system of offender accountability, supervision and support that begins during incarceration and continues as the offender leaves prison and reenters the community. Too often, offenders leave prison and return to the community without supervision, without jobs, without housing. They quickly fall back into their old patterns of drug usage, gang activities and other crimes.

Over the past year, the Office of Justice Programs has been working to develop several different approaches to help communities address these reentry issues. Our goal is to minimize public safety risks that occur when offenders come back to the community ill-prepared to cope.

One promising approach, developed by NIJ Director Jeremy Travis, who is here with me today, is the concept of a reentry court. A reentry court is a court that would oversee an offender's return to the community after release from prison. The court would use its authority to apply graduated sanctions and positive reinforcement, as drug courts do. You've heard me refer to it before, a carrot-and-stick approach: Work with us, stay clean, stay out of trouble, get a job, and we will help you in that effort; but if you come back testing positive for drugs, if you commit further crime, if you violate the conditions of your release, you're going to face a more serious punishment every step of the way.

The Reentry Court would promote positive behavior by the returning offender and marshal resources to support this offender's successful reintegration into society. The court would further use its power to punish, to make sure that the individual stays on the right track.

Judges, working closely with others, would approve a plan for reintegrating the offender into the community. The court would then monitor and enforce the plans.

The partners of the court would include institutional and community corrections officials, law enforcement, local businesses, the clergy and the churches they serve, support services, victims advocates and neighborhood organizations.

This week, the Office of Justice Programs is sending out invitations to state and local jurisdictions to submit their proposals for pilot reentry courts in their communities. To help promote this concept, we will work with a small number of jurisdictions to provide technical assistance, support information sharing, and help them identify funding options.

I think, working through this effort, making sure that this court has a caseload that it can manage, that it has the resources to support and supervise these offenders, we can make a distinct difference in the recidivism rate in this country and make our communities safer.

Q Has this been tried at the federal level with federal prisoners in any way? Or is there a need for this with federal prisoners?

ATTY GEN. RENO: The NIJ and the Office of Justice Programs work with state and locals. We're all so in conversation with Director Hawk (sp), and with others, to see what could be done on a federal level. But in many instances, the state court systems are going to be much more amenable to it because you have a connection between the state court system and the local jurisdictions.

Q How would this thing work in terms of existing sentences? Would you have to reduce sentences in order to put these additional sanctions on the back end of potential sanctions? Or would these potential sanctions by this court be in addition to sentences that these people have already served?

MR. TRAVIS: The idea of a reentry court doesn't presume any changes in sentencing policy. Most people who are released from state prison are released under some form of supervision. But interestingly, 20 percent of those people released from state prison are released with no supervision.

So the reentry court that we are asking jurisdictions to think about, would operate under existing instructions and supervision, which are typically parole systems.

So, often, additional statutory changes will be required; a sentencing commission or a legislature can do that. But in some jurisdictions, split-sentencing options are available, where a judge can sentence an individual to a period of time in incarceration and retain jurisdiction over that individual for a period of time of post- incarceration supervision.

Q Ah -- yes --

Q Do you --

Q -- go ahead.

Q Do you anticipate that this would apply to all offenders, at whatever level, whether -- however many years they have been incarcerated, however many crimes they committed? I mean, would repeat career criminals be available for this?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Those are the people -- if they get out of prison, those are the people we want to see supervised as rigorously as possible. And so what I would envision is again some flexibility for that offender who has continued to commit crime, who too often may come out without

adequate supervision now. There might be special programs tailored for this truly high-risk offender.

For others, there would be different circumstances. But the whole advantage of this invitation is to create an opportunity for us to see what works and what doesn't.

Q You're offering the local communities a plan and technical support, but a lot of this comes down to money. Where does the money come from? Is it state and local, or maybe federal help?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'll --

MR. : (Off mike.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will identify funding options through whatever monies might be available. We will look to see how we can make it work.

But part of the whole effort and what I am seeing across this country is that there are an awful lot of programs available now. Some of these programs are spread too thin. Some of these programs don't have their resources allocated in a sensible way. What this will do is give communities a chance to see what can be done with the power of the court behind them, with a true partnership of everyone involved.

Right now there are a number of offenders who come back. They may be supervised by a parole officer or a probation officer, who may have no connection with the community police officer in the area where the offender is returning to live. Let's see what communities can do to design a partnership between that police officer and that probation officer or parole officer, such as exists in Boston now. Let's see what the faith community can do in terms of working with the court to help this person get off on the right foot.

Most of all, let's see what can be done in prison to identify the aptitudes and the ability of this person, and see if we can match, as we reenter -- as he reenters the

community, these skills, this aptitude with opportunities in the job market.

Q But is this an acknowledgement that the parole system has failed in a lot of jurisdictions, and that the federal government has to step in and take a larger role?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, I don't think this is an example of the federal government taking a larger role; I think this is an example of saying, as we've done with the drug courts, here is something that has worked in a number of jurisdictions. What we did with the drug court was to take the experience we had had in Dade County, we had it evaluated, we then gave people an opportunity to look at it, to experiment with their own. And I don't think it's the federal government taking over, I think it's people seeing what can we do with parole as we know it today, how can we improve supervision, how can we use the authority of the courts at a very sensitive juncture?

Jeremy, you may want to --

MR. TRAVIS: We start with the observation that there are actually half a million people coming out of state prisons each year, this year, and that's a large number of people that are going back to highly stressed neighborhoods with less supervision. And so the public-safety risks that these folks pose to the communities to which they return are very substantial. Two-thirds of the people who are released return to prison within three years of their release. So this is a public safety program that we're hoping to engage some local communities in thinking about. And the idea here is to ask courts to think about a new role in providing -- using their coercive powers to manage that risk better.

Q With additional judges or with existing judges?

MR. TRAVIS: This is a federal program with no direct federal money. It's an idea. But the observation the attorney general made is the accurate one; that there are resources, financial resources and structures in place within communities already that, if coalesced around this

idea, could provide the support that would make it work.

ATTY GEN. RENO: Let me give you the perspective. I think what has happened in the last 30 years in America is that the courts have received cases of people who have committed crimes, gotten involved in drugs because other institutions, from the family to the schools to the neighborhood, have failed, and they all end up in the court system if they commit crimes. The courts have been overwhelmed with inadequate resources and inadequate cohesive partnerships to deal with these problems.

The drug court was an example of a court that limited its caseload, made sure the resources were adequate, and, I think, has shown a return on that limitation, shown that the court systems can work, the courts can be a very vital force in providing supervision, in providing punishment that coerces good behavior.

This is operating on the same theory. Let us see what some courts can do, using the circumstances in their community, the partnerships that are available, the resources that are available; if other resources are necessary, let us see what we can do to support efforts to find those resources, and show what can be done by a court that has the tools to do the job.

Q May I ask you a question on a different subject?

Q (Off mike) -- on this subject, sir.

Q Oh. Yeah, okay.

Q Just briefly, it seems that some of those 20 percent that are not supervised when they leave is because they've served their entire sentences and they're not entering the parole system. For them to be supervised now, would they necessarily be serving less of their time, be let out before the end of their full term, so that they could be supervised? Is that -- that seems to be going against the trend of mandatory minimums.

ATTY GEN. RENO: This is going to depend on the jurisdictions and what is necessary. You may have minimum mandatories. There may be split sentence alternatives. The legislature may look at what is being done and say, "Hey, this is a good idea. We want to provide an incentive." This is giving, in a limited number of cases, state and local officials the opportunity to show what can be done and to determine, through appropriate evaluation, whether it's successful, take the best practices, learn from it, and spread it. If it doesn't work, if it's proven unsuccessful, then we try something else.

Q Are you planning money and setting up pilot programs in any specific jurisdiction, or is this just at this point a paper concept?

ATTY GEN. RENO: It's a concept paper, asking jurisdictions to consider whether they want to get involved in designing a program, for which we could provide technical assistance.

MR. TRAVIS: The call for concept paper was mailed earlier this week to several thousand of local and state criminal justice officials, and we're inviting them to participate over the next year- plus in a discussion about the feasibility of this concept. So we will bring them together, a small number, a dozen or so, that want to try this. We will provide technical assistance. We will help them think about their local funding options. And we hope to learn from this. And as the attorney general said, if this is successful, we expect that it will be picked up by -- at the state level.

ATTY GEN. RENO: Let me point out that the Conference of Mayors has expressed to us that this is one of the most important areas to deal with. We've spent time on prevention, on policing, community policing, early intervention, and programs such as the Drug Court, more prisons, punishment.

But most people come out of prison. We can't incarcerate everybody for the rest of their life, and neither would the people of this country want everyone who committed minor or

medium crimes to be incarcerated for the rest of the life.

They are coming back. Let us make sure they come back with community safety addressed; and our goal being what I guess everybody's goal is, make sure that they don't do it again.

Q What are these -- (inaudible) -- faith-based groups playing? And are you concerned about Church-State entanglement?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am not concerned at all about Church-State entanglement when people work together in a community and a church adopts an offender who has come back, works with them, gives them structure, helps them get off on the right foot, while at the same time another not-for-profit organization across town adopts another offender and becomes mentor to that offender. I think that we can do so much that has nothing to do with the restrictions on Church and State involvement, if we use all community resources in the wisest way possible.

Q Ms. Reno --

ATTY GEN. RENO: This gentleman had a question --

Q (Inaudible) -- now change the subject.

You are going to Moscow soon. Can you talk to us about that visit, about what is that; whether you are bringing anything new to the Russians about the recent allegations?

And actually, I don't even know whether the promised assistance, from the FBI, to investigate the terrorist attacks in Russia, actually took place and what that assistance was; if you could tell us about that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: The G-8 ministers of justice are meeting in Moscow next week. These are the eight countries --

Japan, Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and -- did I get Japan? --

Q And Russia.

ATTY GEN. RENO: -- and we have met regularly. At first it was, I think, every two years. Now, this past year, we've had our first meeting by video conference. But this will be now the fourth meeting, as I recall, of the G-8 ministers.

And we will discuss a whole range of issues, including high-tech crime, extradition issues and matters that recognize that crime is becoming international in its consequences and that we have got to work together and design programs that can respond to international crime, that are understood by all the participants, if we are to be effective in law enforcement. We will have bilateral meetings with our colleagues, including my Russian colleague, and we will discuss how we can cooperate.

Q What about FBI assistance in the investigation of the terrorist bombings in Moscow?

Can you tell us whether that's been forthcoming?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Let me refer you to the FBI so that they can comment as appropriate based on the latest developments.

Q Ms. Reno, in regards to Mexico, I would like to ask you: The lawyer of Mario Ruiz Massieu, who committed suicide here, has told the Mexican media that Mario Ruiz Massieu maybe, instead of committing suicide, became part of a witness protection program providing information that might help in operations like Impunity and Millennium. Can you tell us something about it?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I know nothing about that.

Q They say the body was never seen by the family, the medicine he was taken not even with an overdose could cause death, and also that the letter he wrote, the suicide letter, was wrote about a year ago, according to the lawyer. Is there anything you can tell us about it? Do you have any information?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't -- this is the first I have heard of any such allegations.

Q Do you have any results of the autopsy, maybe?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'll be happy to ask Myron to give you any information that we know of that's public.

Q It's been suggested that --

ATTY GEN. RENO: He hasn't had a time yet.

Q (Off mike.) (Laughter.)

Q It's been suggested that some of the problems in Russia reside with the law enforcement. And one of the issues, current issues in Russia is that they seem to be unable to appoint a new attorney general. The candidate, the president's candidate has been rejected again yesterday. So, how comfortable are you going there in terms of cooperating with the system? How confident are you that it's a working-effective system of law enforcement, leak proof and stuff like that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I can't comment on the Russian system, but I do know that it is important, whenever we can find the opportunity for possible cooperation, that we do so.

Q Ms. Reno, ma'am --

Q On a broad -- (off mike) -- going back to the topic --

ATTY GEN. RENO: Excuse me?

Q In a broader question, going to the original topic about -- the trend in crime appears to be going down. Can you tell me what you attribute that to?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I attribute it to America coming together and saying, "We don't want to deal with crime as we have known it." I think it is federal, state, and local law

enforcement working together. I think it is the development of a balanced approach that includes prevention, intervention, punishment, and now, as we've talked about it, after care. I think it is making sure that guns don't get in the hands of people who don't know how to legally and safely use them. I think it is an example of prevention programs at the local level that are making a difference. I think it may be -- some people attribute it to demographics. There may be that. I think the faith community has become more involved across the country. I think people are reaching out and rebuilding community and reweaving community around children and families at risk.

There are so many efforts under way, but the one thing that is important for me, as a prosecutor in Miami, I remembered when the crime rate went down. It never went down seven years in a row, but it would go down two or three years, and people would become complacent, and you would go to a meeting, and they wouldn't be interested in talking about law enforcement; they wanted to talk about something else.

I want to do everything I can to make sure that we don't become complacent and that we come to accept the fact that we can have a substantial impact on violence. To do that, it's going to require that the community work together more so than ever before. The police officer can't do it by himself. Police chiefs across this country will tell you that. They need teachers and others involved. They need early childhood specialists who can give children a good foundation. They need the private sector to be involved, in terms of job opportunities and preparing youngsters for job opportunities. So much of it depends on our teachers across the country, who are doing so much now. Sometimes it's a mentor who volunteers as a civic activist, who wants to make a difference. But if we can achieve this comprehensive response, if we can have a balanced response, and if we don't become complacent, I think we can continue the effort.

Q Ms. Reno, why is it important to the United States law enforcement officials that Mr. Ochoa, Mr. Madrigal, and others that were arrested yesterday in Colombia come to stand trial in the United States? And this -- what do you

think really are the -- is the expectation that this will happen?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it's useful to understand the context.

Extradition is a tool whereby one country can request of another country the return of an offender who has committed a crime in the requesting country. Some nations do not extradite -- (brief audio break from source) -- to ensure the extradition.

Now, some people say, "Well, why is it taking so long?" -- because there are a number of cases now pending on extradition proceedings. If you look at our court system, extradition proceedings can take some time in certain cases.

I feel very comfortable with the relationship that we have developed with Colombia on extradition. And I think it is important that a crime be prosecuted where the impact is felt. And if this much cocaine has been coming into the United States as a result of this consortium's efforts, this is where the crime should be tried.

Q One other brief question. I don't know if it was reported yesterday in the news conference, but it has been reported in the press that the DEA, the FBI and -- along with assistance from the CIA in this particular drug Operation Millennium. Now is that correct; is CIA actually involved? And can you say anything about their participation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: The DEA was the agency involved in the law enforcement undertaking here.

Q Yes. But you can't comment on any involvement by CIA?

ATTY GEN. RENO: To my knowledge, the CIA was not involved in this law enforcement investigation.

Q Ms. Reno, are there any pending charges against former -- Mario Villanueva from Quintana Roo, related in Mexico with

the Amado Carillo Fuentes cartel?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I will ask Myron to give you whatever information is public.

Q Ms. Reno, this morning in the Dallas Morning News, they reported that they have gotten a hold of some FBI 302s that indicate that there were closed-circuit -- potentially closed-circuit video surrounding the compound at Waco on April 19th, 1993. Are you aware of the existence of any of those videotapes? And do you see any reason why, if they do exist, they would be classified?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have not seen the article, so I don't know exactly what they are talking about. And I think it better to -- rather than comment -- to let Senator Danforth pursue the issues because, if we get into newspaper articles versus others, it sometimes gets confusing.

Q But if those tapes do exist, do you plan to send the marshals over to get them? (Chuckles.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't do "what ifs." And I am not sure that -- (cross talk) -- I think your question is called a bait -- (laughter) -- and this fish isn't going to bite. (Laughter, cross talk.)

Q But you know Waco extremely well. Have you ever heard of any tapes that were recorded from closed-circuit video cameras around the compound?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know of what the specifics are. And I think it's important that Senator Danforth have the opportunity to review this without --

Q I am just curious; have you ever heard of any videotapes --

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know what the videotapes are in the article. So rather than confuse the issue, I think I had better wait till I read the article.

Q Are you satisfied that all videotapes have been produced then for Senator Danforth and the congressional committees, over the years, now that this latest round have been -- have been --

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am going to let Senator Danforth make sure of that.

Q Ms. Reno, have you been interviewed by Senator Danforth or anyone from his staff yet?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, I haven't.

Q Ms. Reno, you recently had a visit from your Ukrainian counterpart. Did she raise the issue of extraditing Pavlo Lazarenko, the ex-prime minister? And how are matters in that issue?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would let the minister comment in terms of what she raised. I think it would be more appropriate.

Q Is there such an issue in the relations between the two countries?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'll let Myron comment with respect to whatever would be appropriate.

Q Ms. Reno, I'm from the Oregonian, and as you know, Oregon is the only state where physician-assisted suicide is legal. The Pain Relief Promotion Act seems to be working its way through Congress. Many think it will pass, which would make the use of barbiturates the drug of choice in assisted suicides illegal. Have you taken a position on this particular legislation, and have you advised the president as to whether he should veto it or sign it?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have made my recommendation to the president, but I generally don't comment on what I advise the president.

Q All right.

ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you very --

Q Could we get a -- could you ask your staff to give us some kind of white paper before you leave for the G-8 conference in Moscow, basically covering the issues?

ATTY GEN. RENO: That would be a good idea. Thank you.

Q Thank you.

Q All right, thank you, Ms. Reno.

ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you all.

END.