



**WEEKLY MEDIA AVAILABILITY WITH**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2000**

**TIME: 9:29 A.M. EST**

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

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Q How you doing?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'm fine. How are you?

Q Well, I'm here. (Laughter.) Well enough to be here --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Well, I'm delighted everybody's here. I hope nobody has the flu and that all is well.

Q Ms. Reno, in light of the -- everybody's been reading this report about former CIA Director John Deutch. In light of this report and in light of what's happening with the Wen Ho Lee trial or any other investigation, have you considered that it may be time for a fresh review of how people are using home computers, or personal computers, in sensitive agencies throughout the government, whether this may be a widespread problem that many people just aren't aware of?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think the agencies should be adopting procedures that deal with the whole issue of cybertools and how we use them, and that is a good issue to pursue.

Q Well, is that something that, say, that you should talk to Mike Vadis (sp) about and say, Mike, maybe we should work up a government -- government-wide structure here, or --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I think that there are structures and systems in place and I think we should continually review them.

Q Ms. Reno, do people in the Department who deal with classified material, top-secret and above, on their computers also have access on the same computers to the Internet?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Again, the procedure should be if the computer is not equipped or machined for classified material, it should not be used on that computer.

Q Ms. Reno, more directly, given the fact that Wen Ho Lee is being prosecuted for mishandling this type of information, and this new revelation from the CIA, is there any possibility of reopening or launching a new investigation or any type of prosecution of John Deutch himself?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would not comment.

Q Well, how do you answer the folks that think there's a double standard at work here between Deutch and Wen Ho Lee?

ATTY GEN. RENO: With respect to the Wen Ho Lee prosecution, any statements made should be made in court.

Q Ms. Reno, given the new information now, are you at least reviewing whether the Deutch case should be revisited?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'm not commenting.

Q Can you draw any analogies between the two situations, or do you think --

ATTY GEN. RENO: To draw an analogy in that situation would be to comment on both cases, and I can't comment.

Q It still seems like it's an agency-by-agency oversight. Shouldn't the National Security Council and those people who are concerned with security in the United States government start some overall review about how each of these sensitive agencies are handling these downloads and give some guidance to people in these agencies to kind of tweak them and say, "This is exposing us to some type of cyberintelligence impact"?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think one of the things that is important -- and I think Director Freeh and others have been focused on this effort -- is how do we identify risk, and how can we come together to take proactive steps to limit those risks? And that would certainly be an effort that should be undertaken.

Q Ms. Reno, it seems that there -- at least on the face -- is a double standard that's being applied when you look at the Wen Ho Lee and the John Deutch case. Who is responsible for making sure that there is no double standard?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Well, first of all, I can't comment with respect to the Wen Ho Lee case, because that is a pending matter. But each case speaks for itself, based on the evidence and the law, and a judgment has to be made, based on the evidence in that particular case.

Q Ms. Reno, on the Elian Gonzalez matter for a moment, Sister Jeanne surprised a lot of people last week, after her meeting with the grandmothers, by saying that she thought that perhaps or very likely Elian should stay in this country because of some of the troubling things that she had seen. Does the statement like that, coming from someone with her credibility, have much impact on you? What did you think of her statements after talking to her?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We had a good long discussion. And she understands what my position is, and I continue to admire her.

(Cross talk.)

Q (Inaudible) -- had any influence on you, though?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Sister Jeanne always has an influence on me. If you knew her, she is a very wonderful person. She is operating from a different vantage point than I am.

Q Do you understand her statements that she sensed fear in that room, that the reason she changed her mind was the fear she was sensing? Did she elaborate on that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would let her discuss what she felt.

I had a good discussion with her. And based on the conversation we had, we simply have different positions from which we are reviewing the case.

Q Did she discuss the matter of fear, sensing fear on the part of the grandmothers, and probably sensing the fear of the society that Castro runs? Did she get into that with you?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would let Sister Jeanne comment on whatever she said.

Q Actually, Sister Jeanne and the woman that -- the nun that was with her, Peggy Albert, did comment quite extensively. And Peggy Albert, the one who was a therapist, a trained child psychologist, said that she told you emphatically that it was her deep belief that the boy would be better off if he were not uprooted again. Did her arguments have any impact on you?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We have different vantage points from which we view it, and to discuss it further would not be appropriate because the matter is in the courts now.

Q Ms. Reno, I am Tricia Clintberg (sp) with Farm Journal magazine.

And last week, there was a study released that talks about drug use in rural America, by teenagers, being a fairly rampant problem. And I think you commented about this at the Conference of Mayors.

But I was wondering, what can the Department of Justice do to help curtail this? I understand that some of the retail stores, in areas like Nebraska, don't sell Sudafed and regular over-the-counter products that could be used by people who want to make methamphetamine. What else do you think could be done?

ATTY GEN. RENO: If you are talking specifically about methamphetamine, which is impacting rural and less-urban areas, what we are trying to do is to develop comprehensive initiatives where we look at it from the point of view of enforcement in an organized effort with state and local officials, where we focus on treatment that is methamphetamine-specific; where first offenders charged in such cases or for those seeking treatment -- where we galvanize the media in terms of public-service announcements; and that we have follow-up to make sure that, as we take out a source that is providing methamphetamine for the area, that we provide alternatives for young people to give them something constructive and positive for their future.

Q Ms. Reno, do you share the State Department's view that failure to return Elian Gonzalez to Cuba would jeopardize or undermine the U.S. efforts to seek custody of the American children overseas?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it is time -- I think Judge Hoeveler cautioned everybody to make their comments in court, and I think further comments should be made in the court.

Q Ms. Reno, Tuesday night on Cuban television, one of the grandmothers of Elian Gonzalez was seen in an interview talking about the meeting that they had, the grandmothers had with Elian Gonzalez, and describing that meeting, trying to make the boy feel more

comfortable. At one point she describes joking around with the boy by biting his tongue and at one point pulling down the zipper of his pants. Did Sister Jeanne mention anything about that to you in the meeting? And do you think that's appropriate behavior?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know anything about it. Sister Jeanne didn't mention it.

Q Ms. Reno, you said a couple of times this morning that you think this should be litigated in court. But you've met, and other Justice Department people have met now with the grandmothers and with Sister Jeanne. I mean, isn't that an extra-legal proceeding? Why, then, conduct those meetings if you think it should all be in court?

ATTY GEN. RENO: As I have said on a number of occasions, I'm always receptive to any new information that might bear on the case, and I want in every way that I can to conduct myself as a person who is now litigating in court while at the same time being receptive to new information.

Q Ms. Reno, is anybody from your department updating you on how the boy is being treated, what his condition is on a day-to-day basis, what his feelings are? Is there any sort of level of monitoring of exactly how the boy is day to day?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it's important that any comments be made in court.

Q Ms. Reno, I'm from South Africa Broadcasting. It was reported earlier this week that representatives from DeBeers had tried to arrange a meeting in Davos with Mr. Klein but that was turned down by your department. The mining group has stated this week they want an indictment that's six years old against them lifted in this country. Is that being considered by your department at all?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'll ask Myron to give you any information that we can on any matter such as that.

Q Ms. Reno, is there any information you can give us on the Olympic investigation out of Salt Lake City? Mr. Samaranch has been interviewed. Is there anything that you can tell us about that interview, what may have transpired, any other indictments that might

be coming down?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Would I do something like that? (Laughter.)

Q Ms. Reno, a year ago you testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the problem of U.S. parents trying to get children back from other countries, the hearing that Senator Helms, I believe, held. And you testified at some length about the difficulties that Americans have. What has the Justice Department done since or what do you know about the nature of this issue since you testified on that a year ago?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We've worked extensively on it with the State Department, with the National Center, and are trying to do everything we can to fulfill our obligations under The Hague Convention and to make sure that children who have been abducted are returned pursuant to The Hague Convention.

Q Can I toss you a slightly broader question I think you might be able to answer, with relation to De Beers? In light of the investigation that Microsoft and BP/Amoco are facing, what chance does a company like De Beers, that admits to controlling 70 percent of the diamond market, what chance does it stand of being allowed to come back and operate in this country?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment, except to suggest that I will ask Myron at the end of the availability to give you any information that we could that is public.

Q Do you agree with the Federal Commission's finding that a lack of coordination between the ATF, DEA and FBI makes the U.S. more vulnerable to global terrorism or crime?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No, I think there's been an excellent working relationship between the agencies. We have, I think, come a long way and people who have observed the agencies in action say they are working together better than ever before.

Q How do you explain then, I guess, the repeated calls for these mergers or consolidation at the federal government? I mean, is Judge Webster just not close enough to the situation, or what?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No, I think Judge Webster -- I have enormous respect for him, and I am looking forward to reviewing in detail the report. I think that his feelings are expressed in the report, and I think that in this situation, Secretary Bentsen first, then Secretary Rubin, now Secretary Summers and I and our deputies have really had a chance to work through issues.

One of the things that I discovered when I took office, there was a great hue and cry that there should be some consolidation of the agencies. I started reviewing what would be involved in terms of cost, because people said it would save money; but in many respects, it would cost money for some years to come, in terms of consolidation of personnel structures, in terms of the impact it would have on agencies. And these consolidations are sometimes easier said than actually done.

I decided that it was important that, instead of focusing on that, it was to focus on the people who were in agencies, that had particular missions, and how we brought them together, unified them with state and local law enforcement, to do the best job possible. And I think we've made real progress.

Q Judge Webster also talked about the overfederalization of crimes, and law enforcement agencies being spread too thin by so many federal crimes now on the books. And that's an issue that Judge Rehnquist and Mr. Freeh, among others, have talked about. Do you see that issue going anywhere? Is that something you're going to push, now that Judge Webster's on board on that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We have talked a long time about that, because I think it's important for there to be an appropriate attention to federalism, recognizing that state and local law enforcement is on the front line, that they are there in communities, they know their communities, they know their communities' needs and resources better than the federal agencies do, and that it is important that, in our system of government, where local government is so important, where community is vital, that there be due regard for their interest.

But what you discover is, you may live all the way down the peninsula in Florida, and there will be international issues that affect you. And so you've got to work with the federal government if you're a state or a local law enforcement official. And if you live in

Northern Virginia, you've got to work with Maryland authorities, District authorities, and other Virginian authorities. And there may be situations where the federal government can more effectively deal with decisions that cross borders, cross state and district borders.

So what we have tried to do is form a partnership with state and local, saying, "You know your resources, you know your needs better than we do. How can we work with you? How can we share information? How can we use the resources of all our governments in the most effective way possible, to address both state and national issues?"

Q Another of his proposals, of Judge Webster's proposals, that seemed like it might not be so complicated would be simply to make the DEA a division within the FBI, just, I guess, have the DEA director report to the FBI director. Does that idea strike you as a good one?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Those were all issues that we considered early on. I spent an awful lot of time on this. I heard from DEA supervisors and DEA line agents.

Each agency has its own special mission, has its structure. And to consolidate it, I think, is -- I think our time can better be spent in getting people to work together. And by moving the boxes around, you don't necessarily achieve that.

Q But are you concerned, by doing that, you give the FBI too much power, that you would create a national police force? Is that one of your main objections?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, I wouldn't characterize that as an objection.

What I am trying to do is get people to work together, to share information. We have one of the best opportunities that law enforcement has had, because one of the best assets law enforcement has is when it has solid information, solid information that solves crimes, solid information that prevents crime by identifying emerging trends, and taking positive proactive steps to do something about it.

We now have, with computer technology and the ability to build data bases with respect to information about a crime, the opportunity to better solve crimes than ever before, if we work together and if we exchange information, but do so consistent with principles of due

process and with proper regard for privacy interests of all concerned.

We have got that opportunity now. We have got tools that we never had before. We have professional policing increasing throughout the country.

And we have seen the crime rate go down. I think this is a time for us to renew our efforts, not to become complacent, and to use the smarts that we have at our disposal with good analysts, professional policing, problem-solving policing, to really make a difference.

Q Ms. Reno, in the case of the Starbucks killings, have you made a determination yet whether to seek the death penalty for Carl Cooper (sp)?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will announce it at the appropriate time.

Q Isn't the appropriate time a hearing that already began this morning?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will announce it at the appropriate time.

Q Back to the terrorism measures -- in this country, we were at a height in the late part of December; and I would ask you, what's the situation? What's the status now in early February? Has the alert status changed? Or can you say?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think that public filings reflect steps that were taken in response to that issue. But I think, as I said then and will continue to say, it is important for all of us to constantly look at what has been done and to see how we can improve our efforts to prevent terrorist acts; how we can do so consistent with the constitutional principles that we hold dear; that it's going to require, again, state and local and federal officials to work together in the most prudent manner possible, and everyone to take prudent precautions.

Q Are we, the United States, on a heightened state of alert, continued heightened state of alert, I should say? Would you consider that to be the status?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would ask the FBI to comment on how they

characterize the status, but I think prudence is dictated.

Q Prudence continually. Okay.

Q Ms. Reno, to get back to the Webster report, these recommendations aren't new. The vice president was making them in his government reorganization report in 1994, and I think they were made a number of years before then. You say you're not particularly worried about giving too much power to the FBI, but isn't there some concern that if you fold all these organizations and responsibilities into one organization, we'd be moving towards a national, fully federal police force, which is against the traditions of this country? Or is this something that's just not even on the board?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Well, as I said, I've -- the vice president discussed it in 1994. I spent a great part of 1993 looking at the issue of whether DEA and the FBI should be consolidated. I looked at the issue from the point of view of how we could most effectively use our resources over the years that would follow. I think it's important that we have effective organizations who know what they're doing in a particular area. I don't -- I have the highest regard for the FBI, so I wouldn't characterize it as a national police force emerging.

Q Even if Director Freeh -- and we all acknowledge that Director Freeh is a professional, dedicated to constitutional values. But if you formed such a national police force, or one with powers beyond the FBI -- that the FBI currently has, you can't always guarantee that the --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Well, you're engaged in a philosophical discussion. Since I'm not in favor of consolidating them, I will leave to you the philosophical discussion, because I've got enough to do in terms of the realities of the day.

Q Ms. Reno, are you at all concerned that the CIA didn't come to you sooner with the information about John Deutch and the computers?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment.

Q Why? The case has been closed.

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment.

Q Do you think it was appropriate that Mr. Deutch would apologize and get, say, get off with that? Do you have any comment on that?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No.

Q No.

Q Ms. Reno, do you think that the vice president is going to be embarrassed by the trial of Maria Hsia opening next week?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment on something like that.

Q Ms. Reno, just going back to the CIA issue a moment. Typically, your policy has been not to comment on ongoing investigations. I'm slightly confused as --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Typically, the Department of Justice's practices have been not to comment when an investigation is open, not to comment whether an investigation is closed, and not to comment whether or not there is an investigation.

Q Ms. Reno, just on a couple airline matters --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: And the reason for that is if you comment in one situation, then the failure to comment in another situation will imply something. So just across the board --

Q On a couple of airline matters, has there been any change in the EgyptAir investigation in terms of the FBI's activity?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: The National Transportation Safety Board is handling that matter and should comment, at this point.

Q No -- no plans to change that status, turn it over to the FBI?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment. I would, again, refer all matters to the National Transportation Safety Board.

Q Is there any criminal review contemplated for Alaska Air?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment.

Q Ms. Reno, in the Maria Hsia case, Judge -- I believe it's Freedman (sp) -- has issued two bench warrants for two Buddhist nuns who have apparently fled to Indonesia. Has the Department started the extradition process with Indonesia to return these nuns to the United States?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I would not comment now, since that matter is pending before Judge Freedman (sp).

Q Ms. Reno, the second half of my earlier question about the self-described behavior of one of the grandmothers during the meeting was whether or not you thought such behavior would be appropriate. Can you comment on the --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I haven't seen the material, so I don't know. I would not comment until I saw it myself.

Thank you very much.

Q Thank you.