



**REGULAR WEEKLY MEDIA BRIEFING WITH**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**MAY 25, 2000**

**9:31 A.M. EDT THURSDAY**

Q (Fed in progress) -- about security of buildings around town, when were you briefed on it, and what was your response?

ATTY GEN. RENO: The day before yesterday. "Let's do something about it."

Q The allegation was that in the case of the -- the Justice Department was not the only building, but in the case of the Justice Department and the FBI, they were able to get in using, I guess, as in all the buildings, false IDs, declaring that they were police. Have security practices been changed as a result of this report?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Yes.

Q Can you say in any way -- in what way?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, I've been told that I shouldn't tell people how to get in the building. (Laughter.)

Q One of the -- why would that be, do you suppose?

(Laughter.) One of the allegations was that the folks posing from the GAO were actually able to drive a van into the Justice Department courtyard. What was your concern about that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I think any time you can create a situation that might make -- create a security problem or create a situation where people could gain access unwarrantedly, we should do something about it.

Q Were you surprised at how easy it apparently was for them to get in here and at the FBI and the CIA and the State Department?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I was surprised that there were so many.

Q Are you at all troubled by the methods that were used or the way this was done?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I just hope they've checked everybody.

Q Did they -- did those intruders that were your "friends" -- posing as your friends from Miami -- did they penetrate your office?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I understood they stood at the doorway there and looked at the conference room.

Q (Off mike.) Would that be the normal protocol in these matters?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't think there is a normal protocol for a case like that.

Q Do you think they did -- is this a good thing that has happened?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think any time you expose vulnerabilities, it's a good thing.

Q Ms. Reno, you're supposed to go Florida later today. What kind of reception do you expect to get?

ATTY GEN. RENO: A mixed.

(Short audio break.)

Q What do you think of Elian and his dad moving into the District?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I understand that they have found Wye remote and that they want to move in.

Q Do you have any security concerns about that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think the marshals are addressing that.

Q Ms. Reno, what is the function of the marshals, at all times maintaining a presence with Juan Miguel and his family? Why are they doing that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: To ensure security.

Q Is it also to make sure that the court order is abided by?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think everybody is doing everything they can on both sides to see that it is.

Q Ms. Reno, I understand that -- (off mike) -- Florida today. This is your first trip home since the Elian situation. Any concerns? Are you looking forward to the trip?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Yes. Any time I go home, I look forward to it.

Q Do you plan any meetings with the exile community while you're there?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am going to be talking with some media that have asked for the opportunity, and I have told everybody that when the time is appropriate, we will try to

make time to have those meetings.

Q I'm sorry. I just want to follow up. (Off mike) -- demonstrations, do you plan meeting with some people that expressed opposition to --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: That was the question, then. What I have said is we have suggested to those that are trying to figure out what can be done to -- Excuse me; I need to just look at Pierre. (Laughter.) I want to do -- I don't want to do anything precipitous, and what I have told everyone is that when the time is right, when people think that circumstances and feelings are right, I would want to do anything that I could.

Q So you feel like you have to wait until things die down a little bit, until people's feelings are calmed a little bit more?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: To do what?

Q Before meeting with the community?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I'd like to meet with them when they think it's best to meet with them.

Q So you --

ATTY. GEN. RENO: You wouldn't want me to meet with you and force myself on you if you didn't want to meet with me.

Q (Chuckles.) So you're going to wait for their signal?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: I want to do it in a reasonable, thoughtful way that respects feelings and tensions and gives people time to talk out issues, and then I want to make clear that it is an extraordinary community. It's one I love, and I want to do everything I can to support it and to make it -- bring it together again.

Q Ms. Reno, may I ask a question? You apparently have put Taiwan on the national security list and listed that nation

as a threat country to the United States intelligence. The country's representative office, the de facto embassy in Washington, has since come out denying that they had supported or were ever involved in any illegal intelligence-gathering, any -- activities. I am wondering whether you'd offer any comment?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: No, I am sorry. I can't.

Q This news in the Washington Times article yesterday came as a surprise to a lot of people, both in this country and Taiwan, because the Taiwanese are generally considered as a friendly nation to the States -- to the United States. I'm wondering whether you can comment on whether there is anything that Taiwan has done over the last few years to make Taiwan, you know, get on that list?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: It would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Q Can you confirm the existence of -- (off mike)?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: It would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Q Senator Specter indicated yesterday that it will be necessary for you to testify before his committee, which is continuing to look into the background of memos that were written during the early stages of the investigation. Will you testify, or have you been asked yet to testify in the Rules Committee?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Not to my knowledge. I always try to accommodate the Senate's interest in oversight.

Q Also, one other oversight question. Congressman Hyde apparently is getting impatient and has been asking for information from the Justice Department, which relates to information that might have been given to the White House related upon grand juries; and how I believe that he is asking that that information be provided within the last three weeks or so. Are you familiar with that request? Do

you think you will be able to comply?

ATTY. GEN. RENO: Yes. Yes.

Q If I may follow up on Terry's question, what -- has there been throughout the Justice Department's history times when the Department shared grand jury material with the president?

And if so -- I gather there was a memo from OLC about it, but how could it be done, given the federal rule, Rule 6-e?

ATTY GEN. RENO: There has been an OLC memo. Apparently it did not change the practice that had existed. The president has the authority and the responsibility to see that the laws of the United States are faithfully executed, to conduct foreign policy, and to defend the national security of the country. And if there is information that goes to that, the -- that's what the OLC memorandum addresses.

Q So have there been times when information has been shared?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We are going through it in detail to see just what we can find in terms of the instances that we may be aware of.

Q But is it a practice rarely invoked?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Yes.

Q Can you even estimate how many times it's happened during your tenure?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I can't estimate, but it is very limited.

Q Going back to the security issue for just a moment, again, beyond just the Justice Department and the FBI, for all federal buildings, this comes not at a time when the country is lax about security but comes at a time after the Oklahoma City bombing, when federal building security was tightened, in a city where terrorist threats are almost a

daily occurrence. Is it surprising that this team from GAO was so easily able to really waltz right in, in plainclothes, using phony ID, to so many federal buildings, given all this emphasis on security in the past couple of years?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Yes.

Q Ms. Reno --

Q What -- (laughter) -- well, what does that say, then? That not enough was -- has been done?

ATTY GEN. RENO: What it says is that we must review the processes, which we have done, see what can be done to prevent it, but also to recognize that there is just so much you can do if you have people who are -- who understand how the system works, understand some of the issues, and try to do it in a very intentional, very methodical way.

I can remember the first time I came to this building. I think it was about 1978 or '79. You could walk right in, walk around.

You could look at the art and the murals. It was a public building.

I think one of the great issues is, "How does a democracy provide openness for all the people to appreciate their public buildings and yet provide the security for the people who work here and for the information that they have?" It is one of the great balances of a democratic society and one that we are going to, as I indicate, take steps to see that we address in terms of security, while at the same time giving people appropriate access.

Q Is this department doing anything to make it tougher to get fake IDs on the Internet, which is a booming business?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We're reviewing that.

Q Well, in particular on that, does it worry that if the CIA and the FBI can't figure out who is a real law-enforcement officer or not, how would you suspect an everyday, ordinary citizen that doesn't have special training to be able to tell the difference between a real FBI agent and a fake one?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am not going to tell you how we do it. (Laughter.)

Q Just to follow up on that -- I guess it was Eric's question -- when you said you were reviewing the false ID question -- you actually said that better than I did -- but does this mean that you are looking into whether the provision of this software on the Internet could be a crime?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I am just looking at it to see how you -- when somebody said they did this off the Internet, I want to understand how they did it.

Q Is this something you are looking at because of the GAO report -- (inaudible) -- were looking at it?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No; because of the GAO report.

Q Is there any possibility that the people who offered this software could be prosecuted? Is that part of what you are looking at?

ATTY GEN. RENO: No, that's what we just asked. And I am just looking at it to find out how it was done.

Q But are you looking at to see if prosecutions could be brought, in addition to seeing --

ATTY GEN. RENO: If we developed any evidence that there was a crime, we would look at it. But right now, I am just looking at it to see how they did it.

Q Ms. Reno, do you think part of the issue was playing upon the camaraderie of the law-enforcement officials? Do you

think that played a role in why the two were able to get inside some of these buildings?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't know.

Q Doesn't it seem plausible though -- presumably, if they were posing as journalists, it might not have been as easy

--

(laughter) --

ATTY GEN. RENO: If they were posing as journalists who were good friends of my brother's from New York, or something like that, I don't know. (Laughter.) Remember, I have a bias in favor of journalists -- (laughter) -- most of the time.

(Laughter.)

Q Sometimes we forget. (Laughs.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: How could you? (Laughter.)

Q Ms. Reno, what is the status of this review of the death penalty, how it's being carried out -- well, not carried out, but how death-penalty decisions have been decided in the federal system?

I know that Deputy Attorney General Holder had told us about this some months ago, that there was a review on the way.

What's the status of that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: It's continuing.

Q Can you indicate what stage you're in at this point?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We're in discussion with the U.S. attorneys. I will be discussing it at the conference, the annual conference. We're getting additional data and we're

looking at all aspects of it.

Q What kinds of data are you asking for?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Data that would inform us as to the means, the fairness, the appropriateness of the death penalty.

Q Is this in addition to data that you've already collected?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Yes. I wouldn't be collecting it again if I had already collected it.

Q I understand that, but I don't --

ATTY GEN. RENO: Well, then I didn't understand your question.

Q If you think there are serious questions that are still unresolved, then --

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think any time you ask for the death penalty, there are serious questions. And we have got to constantly look at what we do to make sure that it's right under the law.

Q To Waco. And pardon me for going back to that, but --

ATTY GEN. RENO: That's quite all right.

Q All right, ma'am. Was there an order that you, yourself, gave that might have been construed -- this is on the day of the gassing, the day that the tanks were penetrating the structure. Was there an order that, after the gassing, at some point there would be demolition by those vehicles of the compound, or is that something that you did not okay?

ATTY GEN. RENO: What I have said on numerous occasions since I asked Senator Danforth to undertake the role of special counsel, I should not comment while he is conducting it, so that he can -- I can ensure his independence.

Q I see. And have you any idea -- has he been in touch with you since he interviewed you? And has he informed you as to a timetable for the completion of his work?

ATTY GEN. RENO: He should comment on any aspect of the matter.

Q Okay. Indeed.

Q Ms. Reno, have you received any reports about apparently a fairly horrific shooting in New York, a botched robbery?

Have you heard any reports about that this morning?

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

Q Any thoughts on the case being dropped against Linda Tripp? Do you think that was the right course of action -- (off mike)?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I'm not familiar with the details of the case, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Q Ms. Reno, are you confident the Filipino authorities will be able to take some sort of action in the Love Bug investigation?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We're working with them, and we're going to do everything we can to see that justice is done.

Q And is extradition still being actively discussed as an option there?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think it's premature to consider that. I think we've got to work together to see what should be done and then take all appropriate action.

Q I'd like to ask a question about your post-Justice Department career -- (off mike). (Laughter.) You were in -- I know this comes up periodically, obviously. You were in a

press conference with Senator Schumer last week, and he said, it appeared only half jokingly, he'd love to see you on the Supreme Court. Do you have any interest in putting off your cross-country trip?

(Soft laughter.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: I was touched that Senator Schumer --  
(audio break from source).

Q (Audio break from source) -- left in office. Is there anything in particular that you hope to finish up, anything that's still pending you want to accomplish?

ATTY GEN. RENO: There's nothing that's finally finished, but one of the things that I want to continue to pursue is to do everything I can to develop in this country an attitude towards crime that is bipartisan and thoughtful in its discussion; that's constructive in its implementation, that's balanced between punishment and prevention and after-care and reentry; that uses data, intelligence, information to figure out what is the crime problem in a community, rather than just following a lead that may take you to a less important criminal organization, and then to use that information correctly under the law and the Constitution, to say, "Okay, now, locals, you take this case; feds, take this; and do what's right, in the interest of the community."

I'd like to see us address the different types of crime. I'd like to see us renew our efforts in terms of domestic violence because, as you've heard me say on many occasions, unless we end it in the home, we will never end violence on the streets and in the communities of America.

I think we have a chance to end the culture of violence in this country, and I'd like to make sure that we're on the road to that and on the road to never ever becoming complacent or accepting about crime in the volume that we've had it again.

I'd like to make sure that I have in place a system that

will give at least a five-year plan for how we deal with the issues of cybercrime, both at the federal level and in partnership with state and local governments.

I'd like to do everything I could to make sure that the relationships that we have tried to develop around the world are on a sound footing, at least from the vantage point of what we have committed to do.

There are so many different issues, but I just want to leave the department in sound shape for whoever comes next.

Q And when do you expect that you would resign your office? Do you have a target date?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I never targeted that. (Laughter.) I take it a day at a time. (Laughter.)

Q Would it be after inauguration or -- depending on the --

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't speculate on that. I just take it a day at a time.

Thank you all.

Q Thank you very much.

END.