



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ENTITLED

“OVERSIGHT OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE”

PRESENTED

MAY 15, 2013

**Statement of
Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice**

**Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives**

**“Oversight of the U.S. Department of Justice”
May 15, 2013**

Good morning, Chairman Goodlatte; Ranking Member Conyers; and distinguished Members of the Committee. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Justice Department’s recent achievements, to provide an overview of our top priorities, and to join with you in advancing our important ongoing work.

Particularly in recent years, the Department has taken critical steps to prevent and combat violent crime, to confront national security threats, to ensure the civil rights of everyone in this country, and to safeguard the most vulnerable members of our society. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of my colleagues – the nearly 116,000 dedicated men and women who serve in Justice Department offices around the world – I’m pleased to report that we’ve established a remarkable record of progress in expanding our nation’s founding promise of equal justice under law, and ensuring the safety and security of our citizens.

The need to continue these efforts – and to remain vigilant against a range of evolving threats – was brought into sharp focus last month, in the most shocking of ways, when a cowardly terrorist attack in Boston left three innocent people dead and hundreds injured. In the days that followed– thanks to the valor of state and local police, the dedication of federal law enforcement and intelligence officials, and the cooperation of members of the public – those suspected of carrying out this terrorist act were identified. One suspect died following a shootout with police and the other has been brought into custody and charged in federal court with using a weapon of mass destruction. Three others have been charged in connection with the investigation of this case, which is active and ongoing.

As we continue working to achieve justice on behalf of the ordinary citizens and brave law enforcement officers who were injured or killed in connection with these tragic events – and to hold accountable, to the fullest extent of the law, all who were responsible for this heinous attack – I want to assure you that my colleagues and I are also committed to strengthening our broader national security efforts. Over the past four years, we’ve identified, investigated, and disrupted multiple potential plots involving foreign terrorist organizations as well as homegrown extremists. We’ve secured convictions – and tough sentences – against numerous individuals for terrorism-related offenses. We’ve utilized essential intelligence-gathering and surveillance capabilities in a manner that’s consistent with the rule of law, and with our most treasured values.

Beyond this work, my colleagues and I are enhancing our focus on a variety of emerging threats and persistent challenges – from drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, to cyber-threats and human trafficking. We’re moving to ensure robust enforcement of antitrust laws, to combat tax fraud schemes, and to safeguard the environment. We’re building on the significant progress that’s been made in identifying and thwarting financial and health care-related fraud crimes. For example, in FY 2012, our fraud detection and enforcement efforts resulted in the record-breaking recovery and return of roughly \$4.2 billion.

Over the last three fiscal years alone – thanks to the President’s Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force and its federal, state, and local partners – we have filed nearly 10,000 financial fraud cases against nearly 14,500 defendants, including more than 2,900 mortgage fraud defendants. As these actions prove, our resolve to protect consumers and seek justice against any who would take advantage of their fellow citizens has never been stronger.

The same can be said of the Department’s vigorous commitment to the enforcement of key civil rights protections. Since 2009, this commitment has led our Civil Rights Division to file more criminal civil rights cases than ever before – including record numbers of human trafficking cases. Using new tools and authorities, including the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, we’ve improved our ability to safeguard our civil rights and pursue justice for those who are victimized because of their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. We will continue working to guarantee that – in our workplaces and military bases; in our housing and lending markets; in our schools and places of worship; in our immigrant communities and our voting booths – the rights of *all* Americans are protected.

But all of this is only the beginning. As we look toward the future, my colleagues and I are also determined to work closely with Members of Congress to secure essential legislative changes – including commonsense steps to prevent and reduce gun violence, and comprehensive legislation to fix our nation’s broken immigration system.

It’s long past time to allow the estimated 11 million individuals who are here in an undocumented status to step out of the shadows, to guarantee that all are playing by the same rules, and to require responsibility from everyone – both undocumented workers and those who hire them. Like many of you, I am encouraged to see that these basic principles are reflected in the bipartisan reform proposal that is currently being considered by the Senate. The Department will do all it can to help strengthen that proposal, and to advance a constructive, responsible dialogue on this issue. I understand that this Committee and other Members are working on immigration reform proposals as well, and I look forward to working with you as those efforts move forward to enact comprehensive reforms.

However, I must note that our capacity to continue building upon the Department’s recent progress is threatened by the long-term consequences of budget sequestration and Joint Committee reductions, which will worsen in Fiscal Year 2014, unless Congress adopts a balanced deficit reduction plan. Should Congress fail to do so, I fear that these reductions will undermine our ability to deliver justice for millions of Americans, and to keep essential public safety professionals on the job.

We cannot allow this to happen. This morning, I ask for your support in preventing these cuts and ensuring that the Department has the resources it needs to fulfill its critical missions. I thank you, once again, for the chance to discuss our current efforts with you today. And I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.