



Department of Justice

"DOING OUR DUTY, PLEDGING OUR VALUES"

AN ADDRESS

BY

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES**

AT THE

NATIONAL SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 1990
DENVER, COLORADO**

I'm delighted to have this chance to pay my respects to all of you here tonight -- from 3000 sheriffs' offices around this country -- and salute the fine work you are doing in law enforcement. Because of your devotion to duty, we can count the country safe, county by county. I realize you're off duty, so I won't bring up a lot of departmental details. You've had those courses already, and I'll bet they were as peppery going down as this Cajun cooking. But I do want to say a few peppery words myself about your duties in law enforcement, and how you come by them.

To do that, let me take you high above even mile-high Denver tonight -- into the stratosphere of that long-running TV program, Star Trek. Every so often, you'll remember, the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise get into such a deep, warring dispute with the Klingons that even Mr. Spock can't solve the intergalactic hostilities. Then another force for universal order steps in. They are called the Archons. The Archons help restore a wise and lawful peace -- and put the Klingons back in their black hole again.

But like much else on Star Trek, the Archons aren't entirely imaginary. Back in ancient times, the chief law-enforcement officer of a Greek city-state was an archon. The archon -- acting as the highest civil authority -- saw that the laws were carried out. Because without the archons, the Greeks realized

what they would have on their hands. Without the archons, they would have. . . anarchy.

That is still the case. That is where -- from a very long way back -- your sheriff's duties could be said to have begun.

Of course, we've seen the legal power to do your duties greatly altered. Even the Sheriff of Nottingham had more powers to handle Robin Hood than you do a drug-dealer, and look how often Robin Hood beat the rap! The same goes for any local sheriff holding down a town during our own Wild West days. We know that enforcement is much more dispersed and legally circumscribed today, and through the President's Violent Crime Bill, we are determined to start to change all that.

In the face of these limits on your enforcement powers, you are also up against one other public hurdle. Most of you, every four years, have to step out front and face the people and get yourself elected. Out of 3096 sheriffs in this country, less than two dozen of you are appointed. You can't just stand in the jailhouse door while somebody else goes out and runs to reappoint you. You have to run yourself, and then stand for what you ran for.

That is why you are keenly aware how much importance the American people place on law enforcement. And that is also why

you are alert to the growing violence -- almost always drug-related -- in your own communities that is like a taint of anarchy in the civil air.

We want to stop this lawlessness -- which already threatens the near anarchy of drug-cartel control in some countries in our hemisphere. We want to back you up in every way we can in this war on drugs -- which has a National Strategy, not a Federal strategy. We know that you are the troops out on the front lines, all across America, where too many of our main streets are turning into mean streets -- and staying that way as they roll on out into the suburbs, and beyond to the open fields.

In plain fact, that enlarging landscape of drug abuse -- throughout our urban and rural counties, with their off-ramp trafficking fed by the nearest interstate -- is primarily your jurisdiction. And we know what you are up against -- patrols without enough vehicles, court dockets that are beyond any court's capacity, incarcerations without enough jail space. We know a sheriff -- however determined to enforce the law -- cannot put handcuffs on a crack epidemic.

That is why we are seeking ways to ease your burden at every level. At the highest level, the President has proposed federal crime legislation that would extend the death penalty to cover major drug criminals, and drop the exclusionary rule in criminal

cases involving reasonable, good faith searches -- which would be especially helpful in drug busts. And we will keep fighting for these provisions until Congress finally sees the light -- the light of the law that exposes violent drug crime to appropriate punishment.

At our level, the Department of Justice stands ready, as always, to combine our expertise with your street smarts in joint task forces to catch drug criminals. And we are always eager to share forfeited criminal assets with those sheriffs and local police who help seize the goods and make the cases in your local jurisdictions. We have shared over \$400 million in forfeited funds to date.

And we have more to share, right here in Denver, following a final order of forfeiture last week by the U.S. District Court of Colorado -- four million dollars seized from drug money-launderers. Ten per cent will go to our Federal Asset Forfeiture Fund, but over \$1,800,000 to the Colorado State Patrol, and an equal amount to the Eagle County Sheriff's Office, for future law enforcement.

You will be hearing more about this from the Vice President tomorrow when he is here to present the check himself. Tonight, suffice it to say that the four million dollars was seized because an alert officer at the weigh station on the Utah-

Colorado border called in a warning to the Colorado State Patrol.

Last November 23, a tractor-trailer rig rolled onto the scales at the weigh station -- and tipped them too heavily to be empty, as the driver claimed. On Officer Lewis Wagner's tip, Colorado State Patrol followed the rig down I-70, finally pulled it over for crossing a solid line, and found five overweight cardboard boxes, stuffed with these millions in contraband, drug-cartel currency.

Divvying up such shares with you -- as well as offering you grants of support from our Office of Justice Programs -- should make clear how vital we consider your work in law enforcement. We seek to share that duty with you because -- a point I want to emphasize -- we share the same values.

Sometimes, I know, you get a cynical answer back from a doubter who wants to know, "What values?"

But, today, events around the world readily remind us of just which American values really count. Totalitarian, Communist governments are falling, one after another, like rotten ramparts on a single, crumbling wall. Over the last year, we have seen their peoples rise to fill these gaps, demanding that their own leaders finally give them the choice, through free elections, as to what they should stand for.

And what they seek turns out to be what this great country stands for -- representative government, freely and fairly elected. . . our free market economy, which promises everyone the opportunity to climb the ladder of success. . . our right to worship God as we see fit. . . our right to speak out and express even unpopular views. . . and yes, that due process of law, guaranteed by our Bill of Rights, which guarantees, in turn, that we remain "a government of laws, and not of men."

But we recognize it still takes good men, and good women, to enforce the laws that make what we stand for. . . work. And such are gathered together here this evening, in observance of the 50th anniversary of the National Sheriffs' Association.

I wish you well and pledge you continued cooperation by the Department of Justice for the next fifty years, and thereafter. May God bless you in your continued endeavors and may God bless America.