



Prepared Remarks of Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales
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Thank you, General Meese, for that introduction, and for your distinguished service to America. When General Meese left the Department of Justice, President Ronald Reagan saluted him, saying that he had led the Department with courage and vigor, and left behind a record of outstanding accomplishment. As in so many other things, President Reagan was exactly right.

I thank the Hoover Institution, director John Raisian, and the Board of Overseers for the invitation to join you here. For decades, the men and women of the Hoover Institution have had a positive and lasting impact on our nation—from their role in spreading the ideals that won the Cold War to developing the policies that continue to expand freedom and transform our society.

It is an honor to be with you.

I have been at the Department of Justice now for about three weeks. There have been a few adjustments. I was personally acquainted with the 30 people on my staff in the Counsel's Office; it is going to take me a little longer to get to know my new team of 110,000. They no longer let me walk around freely when I visit the White House - I now need an escort and they wear badges and guns. And as a former Air Force enlisted man with two stripes, I am still having trouble getting used to the title "General." But perhaps the biggest change has been shifting from serving as a lawyer with perhaps the most powerful client in the world, to achieving justice for a client base of hundreds of millions of American citizens.

My wife, Rebecca, is here with me. She and I attended a dinner in the East Room of the White House last night for our nation's Governors. Although I served four years as Counsel to our President, it is still an incredible and humbling experience every time I walk into the White House. Saying hello to the President at dinner brought back great memories of working as his lawyer. And when he addressed me as the Attorney General of the United States, I felt pride and gratitude. Throughout the evening, various Governors from all over America approached me about particular legal issues - underscoring for me that I now represent not just one client, but all of you, the people of the United States, one country with shared dreams.

It is in this context that I want to explain my vision for the United States Department of Justice and discuss with you some of what I hope to accomplish during my time as Attorney General.

Wherever we pursue justice—from fighting the war on terror to combating violent crime, from prosecuting corporate fraud to protecting and enforcing civil rights—our mission is clear: to expand freedom, extend

opportunity, and protect human dignity and equal justice for all.

Our responsibility at the Department of Justice is to defend these principles-against all enemies, foreign and domestic-so that every American has a fair chance to realize the promise America offers.

These are values that I feel deep in my heart. My family and I have been blessed to call America home and to have been given the chance to achieve the American dream. My hopes and the aspirations of many others with similar stories are reflected in the words of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution, and are secured by our laws providing equal justice to all. And by tradition and statute, it is in many respects the Attorney General who serves as the guardian of those hopes and ensures that that dream is available to all of our children, and to future generations. To me, this is what the Department of Justice stands for, and that is what I will keep in mind every day as I work for our nation.

What does this ideal mean in concrete, practical terms for what we do at the Department? It means that we must strive forward tirelessly to defend America's freedom and security while we build a freer, more just society with equal opportunity for all.

The top priority of the United States government remains protecting our citizens from an unfamiliar type of enemy, one that does not share our values, or cherish life, or respect the rule of law. This foe is quite willing to pursue the mass murder of innocent Americans and the destruction of our way of life in order to achieve their goals. For this reason, they must be defeated. Without security, there can be no real freedom, and we cannot relent in fulfilling this most basic obligation of government. Great progress has been made during the last three years in making us safer here at home, thanks to the hard work of millions of men and women in federal, state, and local law enforcement, in our intelligence community, and in the military.

But this very success confronts us with a new challenge: As the months and years since September 11 pass, complacency becomes our enemy. It is all too human to want to put out of our mind the horror perpetrated on thousands of our fellow citizens and their families.

But we must not forget the individual sorrows wrought by those brutal, unlawful, and unprovoked attacks. Each victim had his or her own story, and we must fortify our resolve by remembering them. Allow me a moment to recall one such victim, whose story is told in a recently published book about the struggle to survive inside the Twin Towers.

Tom McGinnis, a trader at a special meeting of Carr Futures on the 92nd floor of the North Tower called his wife at 10:20 a.m. on September 11.

"This looks really, really bad," he said.

"I know," said Mrs. McGinnis, who had been hoping that his meeting had ended before the airplane hit.

"This is bad for the country; it looks like World War Three." Something in her husband's tone alarmed Mrs. McGinnis.

"Are you ok, yes or no?" she demanded.

"We're on the 92nd floor in a room we can't get out of," Tom said.

"Who's with you?" she asked.

Tom mentioned three old friends-Joey Holland, Brendan Dolan, and Elkin Yuen.

"I love you," he said. Then he mentioned their daughter. "Take care of Caitlin."

Mrs. McGinnis was not ready to hear a farewell. "Don't lose your cool," she urged. "You guys are so tough, you're resourceful. You guys are going to get out of there."

"You don't understand," Tom said, "there are people jumping from the floors above us." Tom McGinnis again told his wife he loved her and Caitlin.

"Don't hang up," she pleaded.

"I got to get down on the floor," he said.

The phone connection then faded out.

For the families of the victims of September 11, these wounds that pierce the heart are still fresh and will never fully heal. And so it should be for all of us, if we are to have the fortitude and resolve to continue defending America.

Despite our successes in capturing or killing many terrorist leaders, in destroying their bases of operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere, in raising our nation's defenses and in helping to spread liberty around the world, the threat posed by al Qaeda and other similar groups is still very real.

We cannot afford to assume the quiet of today will mean peace for tomorrow. As President Bush recently reminded us, "We must not allow the passage of time or the illusion of safety to weaken our resolve in this new war."

At the Department of Justice, we are keenly aware of the continuing threat posed by terrorists-I see it every morning when I begin my day with an intelligence briefing. Last week, I traveled for the first time as Attorney General. I visited South Carolina, where front-line prosecutors from the United States Attorney's offices were meeting to discuss the lessons and the successes of our Anti-Terrorism Advisory

Councils.

These brave and dedicated men and women work each day to track down, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists. We owe them our thanks, and we must continue to support their efforts with the right tools and resources. Law enforcement officers and prosecutors repeatedly tell us that one of the most important weapons they have in the war against terror is the USA PATRIOT Act.

Following September 11, the Justice Department asked law enforcement: "What do you need to better protect our citizens?" For two months our elected leaders met, discussed, and debated our laws and our options under the Constitution. The Bush Administration worked closely with both parties in Congress to shape a proposal that gave law enforcement the tools it needed to secure the homeland while protecting our liberties. It is important to note that this period of intense discussion preceded the enactment of the PATRIOT Act-even as our nation worried about another imminent enemy assault.

Three years later, we can say the PATRIOT Act is working: it has helped prevent additional terrorist attacks. As we look at the challenges of the future, it is important to remember why the PATRIOT Act is so effective. First, the Act lowered the bureaucratic wall that separated law enforcement from the intelligence community. Second, the Act ensured that law enforcement could battle terrorism by deploying many of the legal tools that had long been used to fight drug smugglers, mobsters, and other criminals.

Some of these important provisions are set to expire at the end of 2005. But as the President has warned, the terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule. The coming Congressional deliberations regarding the reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act are important. Debate and discussion reflect our strength as a democracy. We all share the same goal: to give law enforcement the tools they need to keep America safe, while honoring our values, and I look forward to hearing the views of others on this critical question. I am willing to support improvements to our laws that make America safer. What I will *not* support are changes in the law that would make America more vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

As we take steps to prevent another terrorist attack against America, the Department will also move aggressively in other areas to promote equal justice for all. Let me speak for a few moments about six such areas: the President's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative; victims' rights; immigration reform; obscenity prosecutions; human trafficking; and judges.

For the past four years, the President has challenged the Department of Justice to work with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to drive down the rate of violent crime, crimes committed with guns, and trafficking in illegal drugs. We have met the challenge. Today crime is at a 30-year low.

The President's Project Safe Neighborhoods - which coordinates the efforts of Federal, state, and local law enforcement to stamp out crimes committed with guns - has been a key reason for that success, and an example of the cooperation the President had demanded. So is our latest Project Safe Neighborhoods-inspired initiative, Violent Crime Impact Teams. The VCIT initiative has shown how we can fight crime

better, expand freedom, and open new opportunities in communities that had lost all hope.

To date, our ATF-led Violent Crime Impact Teams have moved into 15 cities in need of anti-crime reinforcements. These teams also include DEA agents; Deputy U.S. Marshals; state troopers and county sheriffs; probation officers; and federal and state prosecutors. Working together, they have taken the most violent and the most dangerous offenders off our streets.

The progress thus far in our 15 cities in just the first nine months has been outstanding. We are now expanding this program to new communities. Today, I am pleased to announce that VCIT strike forces will soon be on the streets in five additional cities: Hartford, Connecticut; Houston, Texas; Fresno, California; Camden, New Jersey; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

As we battle crime, we must also defend the rights of crime victims and assist them in their recovery. That is why this Administration has been the first to urge Congress to pass the Victims' Rights Amendment, which would ensure that victims have a constitutional right to information about the proceedings and to participate appropriately in the proceedings. This is a priority for the President and a priority for me.

I applaud Congress for enacting the Justice for All Act, which strengthened protections for victims. Currently, the Justice Department is working hard to implement these measures, which improve crime victims' access to information about the criminal process and give them a stronger voice in seeing justice done. In addition, I will soon issue guidelines for victim and witness assistance in order to ensure that Department of Justice employees fully understand their responsibilities to victims.

Another area where we will improve is in the administration of immigration laws. Every year hundreds of thousands of immigrants come to this country with the vision of a better life. They, too, have hopes of being part of one country with shared dreams. The Department's immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals make important decisions every day about which aliens will be granted asylum or removed to their own countries. In so doing, they are charged with protecting the security of the American people as well as ensuring that those eligible for asylum are given the protection of this great nation.

The Justice Department defends these immigration decisions in the federal courts of appeals. But we know that the Department and the federal courts are straining under the weight of an immigration litigation system that is broken. Under the current system, criminal aliens generally receive more opportunities for judicial review of their removal orders than non-criminal aliens. Aliens should be given hearings that are fair and complete. But reforms would ensure that the system does not reward criminals or overburden our court system with unnecessary appeals. Such reforms are now pending in Congress, and I urge the Congress to act promptly to pass these measures and send them to the President for signature.

Another area where I will continue to advance the cause of justice and human dignity is in the aggressive

prosecution of purveyors of obscene materials. I am strongly committed to ensuring the right of free speech; the right of ordinary citizens and of the press to speak out and to express their views and ideas is one of the greatest strengths of our form of government, but obscene materials are not protected by the First Amendment, and I am committed to prosecuting these crimes aggressively. As an example, recently, the Department announced our appeal in an important obscenity prosecution in Pittsburgh, which involved materials that depicted rape, sexual assault, and a variety of other degrading conduct. I have directed Department officials to carefully review federal laws to see how we might strengthen our hand in prosecuting obscenity.

The President has also made a firm commitment to combating one of the most pernicious moral evils in the world today: human trafficking, modern-day slavery. This abomination does not exist only in other lands; it exists right here, on our shores. Today its victims are usually aliens, many of them women and children, smuggled into our country and held in bondage, treated as commodities, stripped of their humanity.

In one case from New Jersey, for example, two defendants befriended young girls working at a roadside taco stand in Mexico. They offered to smuggle them to the United States, to give them a chance to find "husbands" and a better life. Once here, however, the girls found captivity in a brothel. Through isolation, physical beatings, threats, and psychological coercion, the girls were forced to perform acts of prostitution, often more than six times a day. All the money had to be turned over to the defendants. Under the "rules of the house," the girls were not permitted to have any outside contacts, or even to speak to one another. The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division prosecuted and convicted five defendants in this case, the two ringleaders receiving 17 years' imprisonment.

This is only one example. The Justice Department has been extremely active, showing large increases in prosecutions and investigations in this area and we will continue to do so under my watch. We have partnered with other federal agencies to create more than 20 anti-trafficking task forces around the country. But there is more to be done.

States, governors, and legislatures can help by adopting anti-trafficking laws. The Justice Department has created a model state anti-trafficking law, and I intend to send a copy of it to every governor and legislative leader in those 40-plus states that do not yet have their own anti-trafficking laws.

In protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, the American people expect and deserve a Department of Justice-and a government-guided by the rule of law and inspired by a love of their liberties.

But one cannot extend freedom and opportunity for every American unless we have justice in the courts. And we cannot have justice in the courts without judges who respect the Constitution.

This is why President Bush has consistently nominated to the federal bench men and women of integrity, character, and professional excellence. Every one is a nominee who believes in strictly and faithfully interpreting the law. They believe, as Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist No. 78, that "The courts

must declare the sense of the law; and if they should be disposed to exercise WILL instead of JUDGMENT, the consequence would equally be the substitution of their pleasure to that of the legislative body."

Our representative system of government and our courts require men and women who understand that this is the appropriate role for judges, and the Senate must play its appropriate constitutional role in this process. I have seen first-hand the crisis and administrative strain created by the delay in considering some of the President's nominees.

It is true that many of the President's nominees have received up-or-down votes and have been confirmed. But under our system, *every* nominee is entitled to an up-or-down vote. And several of the President's nominees for the courts of appeals have been denied that up-or-down vote, even though those nominees are eminently qualified, highly rated by the American Bar Association, and would receive majority support if the full Senate were allowed to vote on them. This situation has to change, and I want to work with members of the Senate to find a resolution. We know that some day, we will have a vacancy on the Supreme Court - it may not be this Term or the next, but it will happen - and it is imperative that this broken process be fixed before we arrive at that point. If a President nominates a person who is qualified to serve in the Judiciary, and that person has the support of a majority in the Senate, then under our system that nominee should be confirmed.

Seventy-five years ago this year, the man for whom the Hoover Institution is named presented a vision for our nation. Herbert Hoover's years of public service were guided by the belief that America's sacrifice in defending freedom abroad would strengthen the founding values of our nation: freedom, justice, human dignity, and most important, opportunity.

"Equality of opportunity is the right of every American-rich or poor, foreign or native born, irrespective of faith or color," Herbert Hoover said. "Only from confidence that this right will be upheld can flow that unbounded courage and hope which stimulate each individual man and woman to endeavor and achieve."

It is a testament to the vision and leadership of our Founding Fathers, and of men like Presidents Hoover, Reagan, and George W. Bush that today, the Department of Justice continues to defend the ideals that have transcended time and generations and transformed the world.

I commit to you that I will do all I can as your Attorney General to uphold this vision and these values. We will fight for an ideal of justice expressed in the Constitution-one that shirks no duty and overlooks no obligation to the safety and security of our citizens. We will fight for justice that protects opportunity and lifts up every life. We are one country, and this is the dream that we all share.

Thank you again for having me here today. May God bless you and your families, may He continue to guide your decisions, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

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