



Department of Justice

ADDRESS

OF

THE HONORABLE BENJAMIN R. CIVILETTI
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1979
11:15 A.M.
DALLAS CONVENTION CENTER
DALLAS, TEXAS

It is a pleasure for me to appear before this session of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. I have been Attorney General now for only one month, but before that served in a number of different capacities in law enforcement and from these different positions I have been able to note, time and time again, the crucial need for better consultation, cooperation, and support among all levels of law enforcement.

In the rush of day-to-day work, it is often easy to think of ourselves as separate entities: the Department of Justice involved in the prosecution of federal crimes; the police departments involved in the investigation of all state and local offenses. Sometimes we forget that the difference between a federal crime and a state crime is a matter of legal distinction and even that the investigation and prosecution of offenses are simply successive parts of the same process.

With tight budgets, the increasing burdens of inflation and the need to restrain spending, we in law enforcement are being challenged to explore ways to stretch our existing resources. Regardless of our level of government -- be it local, state or federal -- we cannot ignore the people at the other levels of government, if we are to collectively "get the job done" in law enforcement. We must reach out more to each other. We must give as well as take. We must lead as well as follow. We must support one another and yet

not duplicate our efforts. We are all dedicated to the common goal of achieving effective public safety.

Chief among the ways we can better coordinate our efforts is to enhance our communication. While I was Deputy Attorney General, for example, we initiated regular meetings between myself and representatives of IACP. These allowed a dialogue, a give-and-take, in which we could express our ideas and concerns and work together to insure each other's success. They were of immense value to us and I hope of some value to you. These meetings will continue. While the new Deputy Attorney General will play the major role in this regard, I hope to be able to participate whenever I can.

Another primary vehicle for greater communication and cooperation are the Federal-State Law Enforcement Committees which have been established, in some form, in almost every state. These groups, composed of representatives of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, are intended to meet on a regular basis to engage in policy discussions, to share strategies and to coordinate efforts. It is no secret to anyone here that there can be overlaps, misunderstandings or friction at various times between federal, state and local law enforcement officers.

Through the greater cooperation resulting from Federal-State Committees, as well as from other efforts, we can work on important law enforcement issues together.

Last year, for example, the IACP provided great support for one of our most important projects by carefully analyzing and then endorsing the proposed federal criminal code. I would like to express my appreciation for your continued interest and report to you today on that legislation.

The House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice under the chairmanship of Representative Robert Drinan has met daily for six months to prepare a draft bill for markup in the Subcommittee and consideration by the full Judiciary Committee and the House of Representatives. The effort put forth has been enormous, and the fact that only once or twice were meetings cancelled indicates the Subcommittee's depth of interest and involvement. While we have some serious concerns about that draft, which we have testified about to the Subcommittee, we are enormously heartened by the general approach and consideration given the proposal by the Subcommittee.

Their draft represents a comprehensive criminal code, despite the temptation and the pressure to draft piecemeal legislation. In style and approach it is compatible with

the Senate bill sponsored by Senators Kennedy, Thurmond, DeConcini, Hatch and Simpson, which is a sound vehicle for progress.

Another legislative area in which the IACP is now participating with the Justice Department, in which I know you have great interest, is the proposed charter for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I had the opportunity last week to give testimony with respect to the charter proposal before the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, and some important points were discussed at that time. The fundamental principle of this legislation is to insure that we will conduct ourselves in such a way as to give to the American public effective law enforcement while at the same time enhance civil and constitutional rights. Your present review of and possible future support for this legislation is extremely important to us.

Legislation is not the only way that, by working together, we can help each other reach our goals.

In recent years, when airport security became a national problem, your members responded admirably to help federal officials staff the very successful Civil Aviation Security Program at our nation's airports. In the cargo theft area, I want to commend your organization for establishing a Cargo

Security Committee. In several cities which are transportation hubs of this country, I understand that your members, through participation in the Cargo Security Program of the United States Department of Transportation, have made significant contributions to the enforcement and prevention of cargo theft. These are the kinds of joint ventures between the federal government and state and local officials that are bound to pay substantial dividends if they are tried.

Sometimes, federal, state and local efforts are not well-coordinated. Motor vehicle theft, for example, has been an area of criminal activity where your offices and departments and the federal government have done a great deal, but not all that they can. However, this area serves as the best example of how better communications and a closer working relationship can help solve some of our mutual enforcement problems.

Many of you expressed your concern that the Justice Department's Dyer Act Prosecution Guidelines were preventing a maximum enforcement effort from occurring. The communication of these concerns led to a review within the Department of these procedures. Your cooperation during the past year has done much to assist us in this review and in our attempt to revise these guidelines. I am glad to be able to announce today that we have recently completed our review and will

soon issue new guidelines to the field. These revisions, which would not have been possible without your help, should do much to strengthen the ties between us and better enable both of us to collectively enhance our overall enforcement of motor vehicle thefts.

In the same area, it was our joint effort which led to the drafting of the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act of 1979. This piece of legislation, designed to fill in the gaps of existing laws, is one of the most important crime-prevention measures presently before the Congress. The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations will shortly commence hearings on the motor vehicle theft problem. On our part, we will continue to do everything we can to explain the seriousness of the problem and its effects. The pending legislation has our full support because it will provide the federal government with the tools it needs to contribute its fair share to this fight. I want you to know that your continued support for this legislation will be crucial to its passage.

Finally, the bounds of new areas for cooperation are unlimited. Your involvement with us to revise the United States' treaty with the Republic of Mexico on the return of stolen vehicles represents a completely new area of cooperation. This treaty, which will hopefully soon be signed by the two countries, not only represents another project on which

federal, state and local officials have been able to work together, but will result in building greater cooperation between officials in our country and those in Mexico.

Before I conclude, I would like to just mention one area where there is a great amount of room in the future for expanded cooperation. This is in the area of economic crime enforcement: fraud and public corruption. In the past, there has been very little interaction between prosecutors and investigators in the fraud and public corruption areas; and even less between federal prosecutors and local policemen.

You are by now undoubtedly aware of our plans to establish economic crime enforcement offices in approximately 30 cities over the next two years with 150 federal prosecutors assigned to them to focus even more closely on fraud and public corruption. Eight such units have already been established: Portland, Oregon; Los Angeles; Denver; Cleveland; Philadelphia; New Haven, Connecticut; Columbia, South Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama.

The local police officer has a role in this program by learning the tell-tale signs of frauds against consumers and businesses, which many of you already do well. This organization, in fact, for a few years has issued a training key addressing these two points. However, perhaps the most important area is fraud against the government, which so often leads to public corruption. It is our duty, mine as

chief law enforcement officer of the nation and yours as chief law enforcement officer in your respective jurisdictions, to take steps to restore the confidence of the public in the integrity of its government by all of us no longer tolerating fraud, abuse, public corruption, nor even waste and inefficiency. We can not expect the average citizen, those who make up our juries and taxpayers, to take us seriously about equal justice and fair law enforcement when the governments we represent are themselves subjected to fraud and public corruption with resulting ridicule and contempt.

Economic crime is not easily detected and is very difficult to investigate and prosecute. I urge you to take positive steps to seek out fraud and public corruption, to institute training programs where necessary, to make the cop on the street more aware and more vigilant, and to work closely with our new economic crime enforcement units that are being established around the country.

I mentioned earlier that I have had the great fortune to be able to serve in a number of capacities at the Department of Justice. On each level that I have served, the IACP has provided me with enormous help and support in a number of different ways. Let me take the opportunity of your conference today to extend my sincere thanks to you for this support and for your continued confidence in me.

One of my first acts as Attorney General was to attend a memorial service for three special agents of the FBI who were slain in the line of duty. As you all know, last year almost 100 police officers were also killed in the line of duty. These senseless tragedies should serve to remind all Americans of the dangers and difficulties involved in police work and the deadly risk and brutality visited on police officers by dangerous public criminals.

On a number of occasions in the past I have stated my belief that the work of police officers in this country is often the hardest, the most sensitive and provides precious little financial reward. There is no more professional, dedicated and hard-working group of patriotic men and women than the police officers of this great country, and your efforts so often go unnoticed or unpraised. Just as I have had your support in the past, let me state again that you have mine and I praise you, the leaders of these men and women, for your honor and your sacrifices on behalf of all the citizens of this country.