



# Department of Justice

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PRESS CONFERENCE

ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN N. MITCHELL

Following meeting with Midwestern Mayors

Department of Justice  
September 17, 1970

ATTORNEY GENERAL MITCHELL:

We have had the opportunity of meeting this morning with representatives of 10 midwestern cities who have found they have a common problem in connection with bombing and terrorism, and collateral to that, the civil disturbances that have taken place in their cities.

We had a complete, open and frank discussion of these problems as they relate to the local law enforcement agencies and to the federal establishment. Obviously, we are faced with a new problem in the field of law enforcement and criminal justice and we recognize that we will have to take new and different steps if we are to solve this problem and remove the terror that is emanating from our cities and campuses.

From the point of view of the Justice Department, we were able to advise the representatives of the cities of the activities to solve these problems that are going on within the Justice Department. The FBI has scheduled law enforcement conferences in the area of bombing and for training local law enforcement personnel.

In addition, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration has provided a grant to the International Association of Chiefs of Police and we discussed at some length the pending legislation dealing with explosives, both with respect to the bill relating to the criminal activities as well as to interstate movement. These two bills are currently pending in the House and Senate. The results of the meeting, I believe, bring to the point that in this particular area greater cooperation will be required between the federal and local law enforcement establishments. We will work to that end so that the total resources in the federal government and the local law enforcement agencies will be brought to bear on it.

I have here on my right Mayor Leahy of Omaha, who was the gentleman who stimulated the meeting in the midwest previously and who arranged to bring them to us in the Justice Department. Mayor, I hope you'll say a few words about our discussion this morning.

MAYOR LEAHY:

Mr. Attorney General, first of all I want to thank you for opening your doors and allowing us to come into your office to discuss the problems that we feel we share mutually in our mid-western cities.

I feel it was a most productive meeting and I can leave Washington and go back to the community of Omaha knowing that we can, in the future, look forward to changes in the judicial system and the prosecutorial procedure, that we can suggest new approaches, that we can expect the technical assistance, guidance, counseling and financial help from the Justice Department here in Washington.

I am leaving now with more hope than I had before I came that we can effectively combat the terrorism that is striking every city in this country. I do want to thank you and your staff and I will be looking forward to working with you and with my colleagues who are here with us in Washington today representing 10 midwestern cities.

I feel that through this regional effort, if you can label it as such, we can move together to help one another and we can combat the crime and the terrorism and the drug traffic that is plaguing us today in America.

#### QUESTIONS FROM NEWSMEN

Q. Mr. Attorney General, is there a pattern of conspiracy in this problem?

A. There is no question that some of these acts of terror that take place are brought about by groups that exist in this country and that they don't concentrate in one particular locality but carry on their activities in more than one place.

Q. Who are these groups?

A. As you know very well, we don't characterize by groups for the purpose of public discussions. It is our function in the Justice Department to seek out the individual perpetrator of crimes or those who exist in a conspiracy to perpetrate a crime and to apprehend and prosecute them as individuals or groups.

- Q. You mentioned changes in the judicial system and prosecutorial approaches, Mayor Leahy, what kind of changes?
- A. Well, of course, I concur with the position of the Justice Department, the Attorney General, and Justice Burger that it is necessary to bring those charged with a crime to justice as soon as possible. I believe that Justice Burger feels that it should be within 60 days. I sat as a Judge and a former Assistant District Attorney and I know that it is necessary in our judicial system today to bring people to justice as soon as possible. Give them their immediate trial, get them off the streets and if they are found guilty, put them where they belong.
- Q. Mr. Attorney General, a large number--more than a dozen young people--were charged with putting together a bomb plot in July, I guess it was, and the leaders of this group have not been found. Why is it so difficult to find these young people?
- A. Because of their going underground. All of our resources have been brought to bear to deliver them up. We have not apprehended all of them. They are still being sought and I am sure that they will be apprehended, hopefully, in the not too far distant future. But it is the proverbial idea of looking for the needle in the haystack.
- Q. Are you finding the existence of any sort of underground railroad among the moderate middle class people who harbor them?
- A. There are obviously people who do help them to move from place to place, but I wouldn't call it an underground railroad. I think it's part of the organization that they belong to and work within.
- Q. Is there any single leadership? This relates to the earlier question about directing that a bomb attack is to take place at city x and city y and so on, on a given occasion.
- A. Not on a national basis. It only exists within these groups.
- Q. It's entirely possible that the type of terror attacks that we've seen may be expanded to include, one might think, acts in this country by various Arab terrorists groups which blame the United States for certain things in the Middle East. Are Arab students or Arabs coming into this country, some of them, under surveillance with that thought in mind?

A. There are people coming into this country from all over the world that have intentions in these directions, and of course, they are under surveillance.

Q. Is that "yes" then to Arabs as well?

A. From all over the world.

Q. Mr. Attorney General, is there any indication that Vietnam veterans who learned about guerilla warfare from the Vietcong are involved?

A. Not as a class or group. There are individuals that have served in the military forces who are participating in some of these activities.

Q. Is there really a way to stop bombing? You've got individuals who can acquire explosives easily. Is there any effective way to stop them?

A. There is, of course, by shutting off the supply. We feel we'll be better able to do this after we obtain our federal legislation. The legislation now before Congress provides for greater deterrent in this activity. There certainly is a limited number of these maniacs. Their apprehension and incarceration will take them from the scene. With these different approaches, I believe that we will get at the cause and eliminate it.

Q. It's also been suggested, sir, some of the faculties contain teachers who were more agitators than instructors.

A. I don't doubt that exists in substantial numbers of institutions around the country.

Q. What is a substantial number?

A. Well, I haven't counted them all, but I'm sure it exists in substantial number. As you know, we have many hundreds of institutions around the country.

Q. Regarding the University of Wisconsin bombing, are we going to see the last of this or more of it? Where are we?

A. I don't know as I can predict. I believe that the circumstances of the Madison bombing are so shocking, with the loss of life involved, that it may act as a deterrent against some of these people undertaking activities of this sort.

Q. Did anything new come out of your discussion today here at the Justice Department regarding the Madison incident?

A. Mayor William Dyke: We didn't try to focus on the Madison incident today. What we are trying to do here first is to achieve a recognition that the problem is national in scope; that in many instances, the solutions are beyond the resources of an individual local community; that we are very desirous of early passage of the legislation now before the House Judiciary committee, introduced, as I recall, as long ago as April and July and still requires action and passage, and we are hoping that the House will remain in session in order to get this explosives handling and penalties legislation passed.

We feel in Madison that there is no reason to be optimistic about the forthcoming semester. As of the present time, the campus is quiet. We are in the process of registration, but there is no reason for any campus to be optimistic about this fall. I think people are shocked by the bombings. They are, as a result, quite apprehensive for themselves, for their families and for the safety of the young people who are at the university. But as I say, there is no reason to be optimistic.

Q. There were reports that you had been, you or some of your city officials, had been conferring with some of Mayor Daly's people in Chicago. Is that true?

A. We've discussed our mutual problems with a number of cities that centered in the Omaha conference of the past several weeks. We feel that there is a necessity for a closer degree of communication and cooperation among our various cities because of the people involved in the riots and in the bombings appear to have a very mobile character and will move freely among the various cities. We feel its necessary, therefore, for us to develop a closer co-ordination and cooperation among our cities.

Q. Mr. Mayor, would that cooperation take the form of an elementary or perhaps even a sophisticated intelligence system for your police department?

A. Mr. Dyke: I don't think it's properly characterized that way. I think what we are trying to do here is to achieve among our cities a cooperative effort so that we do know where the problems lie. Where there is expertise that is developed in one city that appears to be effective rather than have to wait months to read about it in a journal or find it at some national conference than we should attempt to trade this information about how to handle the problems as quickly as we can. I think what we're trying to do is to work to limit the capacity for bombings and limit the opportunity for bombing and, of course, it takes the nature then as physical security, yes,

Q. How much information is available?

A. Mayor Dyke: The Department said it is going to continue its policy of immediately advising local law enforcement agencies of information relating to bombing spots, and bomb threats.

Q. Have you ever received or how often do you receive information from federal agencies? Have you received it in the past?

A. Mayor Dyke: That's primarily something the chief of police would handle. I think it would be fair to say that law enforcement agencies do try to trade information where it appears it may have a bearing on that particular municipality.

Q. How long have you been receiving information regularly from federal agencies on possible bombing spots or bomb threats to the lives of the policemen?

A. Mayor Dyke: There is a flow of information among local municipalities and to and from the federal government and state governments, yes.

Q. But you can't think of any specific example of that?

A. Mayor Dyke: I don't have that close of a relationship to the day-to-day operations. I do know we trade information among states and the federal government.

Q. What are your personal feelings about the conspiratorial aspect?

A. Mayor Dyke: It's my opinion that this is a national effort. I'm not sure the definition of conspiracy is required by the Supreme Court. But I'm satisfied that there are people who gather for the purpose of disrupting our cities and that they move from one city to another.

Q. Did you come away from this meeting with anything specific that would help Madison or the University of Wisconsin.

A. Mayor Dyke: Yes, I think I did. I think I came away with a specific opportunity to create regional cooperation with the cities that are here and to have the opportunity specifically to apply for LEAA funding to help support it.

Q. Mr. Mayor, apparently you differ with the Attorney General, who feels it is not a national conspiracy. You feel it is, and he thinks it's certain individuals who move around.

- A. Mayor Dyke: I don't think there is a major difference there, but I'll leave it to the Attorney General.
- A. Mr. Mitchell: I think you did not understand what I attempted to convey. A national effort would be a single unified effort in this direction by all of the perpetrators. That is not the case. I did not mean to say that there were not groups that were working on a national basis, obviously they are.
- Q. Mayor, were there any specific complaints by your group this morning?
- A. Mayor Dyke: No, what was discussed was a more effective way of exchanging valuable information, a more cooperative effort between the local law enforcement officers and the intelligence units with the federal agencies.
- Q. Do you have any complaints about federal agencies?
- A. Mayor Dyke: No, except that I feel that we can work closer together.
- Q. Attorney General Mitchell, do you have any news to announce about the fugitives in Wisconsin in the Madison bombing or anybody else being sought?
- A. Mr. Mitchell: Not for the purpose of announcement at this time, no. Thank you gentlemen.