



Department of Justice

STATEMENT

OF

ALBERTO R. GONZALES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OVERSIGHT

PRESENTED ON

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**PREPARED REMARKS FOR
ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBERTO R. GONZALES
AT THE
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.
THURSDAY, APRIL 6th, 2006**

Good morning, Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Conyers, and members of the Committee.

I appreciate this opportunity to discuss a number of issues that are of vital importance to Congress, the Justice Department and the American people.

When I reflect on the 14 months I've served as Attorney General – and the countless ways the Justice Department impacts lives across this great Nation – I am always reminded that we have a unique responsibility as stewards of the American Dream.

The American Dream is about living and prospering in a safe, secure, and hopeful society. The Justice Department stands guard over that dream – by fighting crime, preserving civil rights, and protecting our Nation from terrorists.

Our record is impressive. We have not suffered another terrorist attack here at home, and our Nation's violent crime rate is at its lowest level in more than three decades.

Now, we have to build upon that record. To guide the work of the Department, I have established priorities rooted in the pursuit of the American dream: fight terrorism; combat violent crime, cyber crime, and drug trafficking; protect civil rights; and preserve government and corporate integrity.

In each of these six areas of special emphasis, we have a plan to secure the hopes and opportunities of the American dream – a secure homeland, safe communities, a fair and equal chance to succeed, and strong support for the cherished values that make our country great.

First, on terrorism, our top priority. The terrorists seek to destroy the American promise of liberty and prosperity – they stand in the way of peace and progress. They are determined to attack us again here at home. Thank you for your multi-year effort to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. It was a tough process, but an important one.

We continue to work to prevent another terrorist attack by staying on the offensive, working hard to detect their plans, bringing known operatives to justice and increasing our efforts to disrupt their ability to use our open society as an invitation to attack.

This fight is not easy. Terrorism cases are some of the most difficult to investigate and prosecute because of the novel and challenging issues they raise.

We've had to adapt our efforts to a new world of changing techniques and technologies...and work both harder and more

creatively to stop planned attacks and prosecute terrorists in the courtroom. This cutting-edge work has lead to many successes.

Most recently, of course, a jury found that Zacarius Moussaoui was eligible for the death penalty after determining that he was responsible for deaths on September 11th, 2001. We are pleased with the jury's ruling in this important case. Our efforts on behalf of the victims of 9/11 will continue as we pursue the next phase of this trial.

In addition, last week, Ahmed Omar Abu Ali was sentenced to 30 years in prison for providing support to al Qaeda, conspiring to assassinate President Bush, and conspiring to hijack and destroy commercial airplanes in an attack similar to the attacks of September 11th, 2001. This terrorist will now be behind bars in a federal prison where he can't harm American citizens.

Moussaoui and Abu Ali join the other terrorists that the Department has removed from society such as Richard Reid, the so-called "shoe bomber"; John Walker Lindh, the "American Taliban"; and members of the Virginia Jihad Network and another former cell located in Brooklyn.

We've broken up terrorist cells in Portland, Oregon, Buffalo, New York and recently charged three men in Toledo, Ohio with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and conspiring to commit acts of terrorism against Americans overseas – including U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq. In all, we've charged 431 people and secured 241 convictions or guilty pleas in terrorism related cases since 9/11.

And we're continuing to search for new ways to improve our ability to combat terrorism – whether it is in the courtroom, at our borders, in our cities, with our international partners, or here in Washington, D.C.

As you know, the Justice Department has been authorized to stand up a National Security Division. This will bring under one umbrella the Department's primary national security elements – including attorneys from the Counterterrorism and Counterespionage Sections of the Criminal Division, as well as those from the Office of Intelligence Policy and Review who specialize in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This fulfills a key recommendation of the WMD Commission. It's another step in eliminating the infamous "wall" between our intelligence and law enforcement teams.

The President has nominated U.S. Attorney Ken Wainstein to serve as the first Assistant Attorney General for the Division. Ken is the right man for the job and I hope the Senate will consider his nomination quickly.

In addition to our ongoing fight against terrorism, the Justice Department continues to focus on five strategic priorities that are fundamental to the American Dream: combating violent crime, drug trafficking, and cyber crime; protecting civil rights; and ensuring that our public and private institutions operate with integrity.

We've been working in these areas with a targeted agenda focused on producing results. I thought I would give you a sense of those results over just the past few weeks.

Every American deserves to live free from the fear of violent crime. We remain focused on reducing gun crime and liberating communities from the stranglehold of gang violence.

As you probably know, we're reducing gun crime across the country through the President's Project Safe Neighborhoods program. The numbers show that this initiative has been very successful. That's probably why most U.S. Attorneys across the country have started to use their PSN programs to target violent gangs operating in their districts.

As usual, those people on the front lines – including U.S. Attorneys, federal law enforcement officers, police chiefs, and community activists – know what they need to keep citizens safe. So we've responded with a comprehensive anti-gang strategy that uses the successful PSN model to shut down violent gangs that terrorize our streets and neighborhoods. Nationwide, the strategy focuses on prevention, prosecution, and preparing prisoners for a return to society.

As part of that effort, I was in Los Angeles last week to announce that L.A. is one of six areas that will participate in a pilot project to target anti-gang resources in new and imaginative ways. In addition to L.A., this program will help combat gang activity in Cleveland; Dallas-Fort Worth; Milwaukee; Tampa; and a gang corridor that stretches from Easton to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia.

Each location will receive nearly \$2.5 million dollars to implement innovative solutions in those three strategic areas: prevention, prosecution, and prisoner re-entry. The United States Attorney in each area will work with State, local and

community partners to intensify and expand their collective efforts to combat violent gangs.

When we talk about violence – especially keeping our children safe – we often fear what can happen as they walk to school, or play on a ball field, or stand on a busy sidewalk with friends. But in today’s world, our children are not always safe once they come inside. They can log onto the Internet and open themselves to new and hidden threats.

The Internet must be safe for all Americans, especially children. That’s why we are committed to ensuring that there are fewer places on the Web where our children are in danger.

I recently announced a major new initiative: Project Safe Childhood. The goal of Project Safe Childhood is to prevent the exploitation of our kids over the Internet – to clean up this new neighborhood just as we’ve worked to reduce gun crime on our city streets.

U.S. Attorneys in every district will partner with local Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces and community leaders to develop a strategic plan based on the particular needs of their communities. They will then share resources and information to investigate and prosecute more sexual predators and child pornographers than ever before. And they will coordinate in seeking the stiffest penalties possible.

Two weeks ago, I announced the indictments of 27 people for allegedly participating in a pornographic chat room called “Kiddypics and Kiddyvids.” Some participants of the chat room

have been charged with using minors to produce images of child pornography and then making those images – including live shows – available to other members through the Internet. For example, according to the indictment, one defendant allegedly produced live streaming video of himself sexually molesting an infant.

The Project Safe Childhood initiative will help us target this kind of offensive behavior and prosecute the individuals who harm our children over the Internet.

Even as advanced technologies help cultivate new dreams, too often those dreams are wiped out by the pitfalls of illegal drug abuse.

No community will fully prosper if drug abuse is rampant. That's why we will continue to dedicate ourselves to dismantling drug trafficking organizations and stopping the spread of illegal drugs.

Just last week, I announced the largest narcotics-trafficking indictment in our history. Fifty members of the Colombian narco-terrorist group FARC have been indicted for allegedly importing more than \$25 billion dollars worth of cocaine into the United States and other countries. The FARC is responsible for overseeing the production of more than 60 percent of the cocaine imported into the U.S.

Three senior leaders of this violent group are in custody in Colombia and we've begun the process to have them extradited to the United States. Several additional FARC members appear

on the Justice Department’s Consolidated Priority Organization Target, or CPOT, List – which identifies the most dangerous international drug-trafficking organizations. The list was created at the beginning of this Administration to ensure that drug enforcement resources were directed in the most productive fashion possible.

This initiative has been successful. Last year, we dismantled six of these “CPOT” organizations and disrupted the operations of six more. From Afghanistan to Mexico and from South America to the Middle East, we are identifying the world’s most significant drug dealers and then working with our international partners to arrest them and extradite them to the United States for prosecution.

We’re also continuing and expanding our work to combat the spread of methamphetamine across the Nation. This drug is easy to manufacture and extremely addictive. The Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act provides law enforcement with additional tools to disrupt the production and trafficking of meth. It establishes a national standard regulating meth ingredients, confronts the human and environmental consequences of small toxic labs, and increases penalties for convicted drug kingpins.

Law enforcement has done a good job of shutting down small meth labs here in the United States. Last year we announced the results of Operation Wildfire, which led to more than 400 arrests and dismantled more than 50 labs.

Now, we also continue to target Super Labs outside of our borders. Meth is manufactured in large quantities in Mexico, but

the finished product comes back to the United States through illegal drug trafficking routes.

The Administration is working with our counterparts in Mexico to address the production and trafficking of methamphetamine. Also, the Drug Enforcement Administration has provided training and equipment to meth-focused law enforcement teams in Mexico. To support this effort, Mexico has imposed import quotas on the primary ingredient used to make this destructive drug.

Forty years ago, the color of your skin was as much of an obstacle to the American dream as violent gangs, sexual predators, and drug dealers are today. We've come a long way from that brand of state-sponsored racism, but we must continue to safeguard the civil rights that are fundamental to the opportunities we cherish in this country.

All Americans should have the same chance to pursue their dreams by earning a job, finding a home for their family, and voting for their government representatives. We will continue to aggressively combat discrimination wherever it is found. I am pleased that the Department prosecuted a record number of criminal civil rights cases in the last two-year period.

Earlier this year, I announced Operation Home Sweet Home – which will refocus and expand the Civil Rights Division's Fair Housing Act testing program.

We will investigate suspected offenders with testing visits designed to expose discriminatory practices. Over the next two

years, we will bring the number of these targeted tests to an all-time high, ensuring the rights of all Americans to fairly obtain housing.

The President and I have both called for the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. This was one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in our history and deserves our Nation's attention.

Three weeks ago, I was in Chicago to announce the release of a report detailing the Justice Department's efforts to halt the pernicious evil of human trafficking – one of the foremost civil rights issues of our day.

The report tells the painfully human story of young men and women who are smuggled into the United States and sold as household servants or field workers, locked up in sweatshops and factories, or forced to work as prostitutes and sex slaves. There is no place in our compassionate society for these peddlers of broken dreams. President Bush has pledged his support for this effort, and I've made it one of my highest priorities at the Justice Department.

Because of the struggles of my parents and grandparents, I care deeply about civil rights in America today. I care about applying the law to everyone equally, so that everyone has an equal opportunity to pursue the American dream.

Millions of people come to America every year to pursue that dream because of the rights and liberties we've guaranteed for generations. And our government and economy are the envy

of billions more because we have systems that are open, honest, fair, and dependable.

Integrity in government and business is essential for a strong America...taxpayers and investors deserve nothing less. That's why we will investigate and prosecute corruption wherever we find it, and we will preserve the integrity of our public institutions and corporations.

This list of priorities is not exclusive. We have other responsibilities that are no less important to the American dream.

For instance, enforcing our immigration laws will help us remain an open and welcoming society, by cracking down on illegal activity and closing our borders to criminals and terrorists. The President has called for comprehensive immigration reform policy that is based upon law and reflects our deep desire to be a compassionate and decent Nation. I join him in urging Congress to take action that makes sense for everyone in America.

And a tough and fair sentencing system will give teeth to our enforcement objectives, improve our deterrence efforts, and ensure that every American is treated fairly before the bar of justice.

We are working hard to protect and preserve the American Dream. Today America is a safer and more secure place than it was. Crime is down, drug use is down, and we disrupting terrorist activity from coast to coast. I appreciate your

partnership as we strive to perpetuate the vital role of the Justice Department in securing that dream for future generations.

Thank you.

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