



A MESSAGE FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Under the leadership of President Bush, the Department of Justice remains focused and firm in our primary mission to prevent additional terrorist attacks and preserve the lives and liberties of all Americans. Our efforts are working. In the past two years, no major terrorist attack has been perpetrated on our soil. Since September 11, 2001, the Justice Department has dismantled terrorist cells in Detroit, Seattle, Portland, Tampa, Northern Virginia, and Buffalo. In cooperation with local law enforcement, the Department has disrupted weapons procurement plots in Miami, San Diego, Newark, and Houston; shut down terrorist-affiliated charities in Chicago, Dallas, and Syracuse; and brought criminal charges against nearly 300 individuals and secured convictions or guilty pleas from 155 people.

Today, our nation's overall violent crime rate is at a 30-year low. This means that in the last two years, more than one million Americans were spared the pain and anguish of being victimized by crime. It means that in two years 200,000 fewer people were robbed, fewer men and women were assaulted, and 74,000 fewer women were raped or sexually assaulted. People are not just safer on the street because violent crime is at an historic low; they are safer in their homes as well. In the last two years, attempted theft, robberies, and attempted forcible entries have all decreased; and overall crimes against property are down 13 percent.

All Americans are safer today than they were two years ago. The violent crime victimization rate has fallen for all racial and ethnic groups. The violent crime rate has dropped across all income levels and in every part of the country.

The President's FY 2005 budget request presents a plan that meets our critical mission requirements by funding priority items articulated in the Department's Strategic Plan. For FY 2005, the Department of Justice requests 109,325 total positions and \$22.18 billion. This includes domestic discretionary levels of 109,325 positions and \$19.68 billion. This mission-focused request not only reflects increases, but also ensures good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. For the third consecutive year, the Department's budget includes efficiencies and cost absorptions to offset the costs of our priority enhancements. In FY 2005 these offsets amount to \$559.8 million for law enforcement components.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made to strengthen the efforts of the Department to date, but many challenges still lie ahead of us in protecting America against the threat of terrorism. In the days after September 11, 2001, President Bush reminded the nation that we face a difficult struggle of uncertain duration. In this struggle, he said, "Perseverance is power." I am confident that the Department's 2005 budget request reflects the continued commitment to preserving the lives and liberties of all Americans by preventing and disrupting additional terrorist attacks. With these resources, the Department will have the tools to protect all Americans against the threats of terrorism, while continuing to vigorously enforce federal laws; deter, investigate, and prosecute federal crimes, including gun, drug, and civil rights violations; incarcerate offenders; partner with state, local, and community groups to prevent crime; and provide leadership and assistance in meeting the needs of crime victims.

John Ashcroft