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## Major Executive Speeches

### Lou Reigel, Special Agent in Charge, FBI New Orleans Crime Commission March 30, 2004

Good afternoon. Thank you for having me. I'm sorry Director Mueller could not make it today. He very much wanted to be here, but he had to appear today before the 9-11 Commission. Along with his apology, he sends you his very best wishes and his gratitude for your support and your friendship. It is good to be here among friends, and I would like to thank the Metropolitan Crime Commission for all you do to help us do our jobs better. Martin and Rafael thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to making New Orleans a better city.

Today, I would like to speak with you about the FBI of today - the many changes the FBI has gone through over the past 2½ years, and where I think the New Orleans office of the FBI is headed in the immediate future.

As Rafael indicated, I currently serve as the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI for the State of Louisiana. I have been in NO for nearly ten months. I can tell you that I view this assignment as one of the best I have had in my career. NO is a wonderful and unique city; the people are friendly and polite; and the food is fabulous. If I continue to experience the fine cuisine, I am going to have to find a tailor to expand the waistline of my trousers.

I have served in the FBI for more than 28 years. I have been assigned to five field offices and two tours of duty in WDC. I have seen the FBI go through many changes, but none as dramatic as in the past 2 ½ years. The FBI is a new, and I believe, stronger and better organization. Some of the changes have been slow to come. Change is difficult, particularly when you are changing an agency which is nearing 100 years old and one with such a proud history. Our change has been ambitious and all consuming. And our critics, particularly in the WDC beltway, are many. However, Winston Churchill once admonished - "when you are going through hell -- keep going." The FBI continues to move forward.

Since September 11 the prevention of terrorist attacks has been the FBI's top priority and overriding focus. While we remain committed to our other important national security and law enforcement responsibilities, the prevention of terrorism takes precedence in our thinking and planning. We have doubled the number of agents devoted to terrorism bringing the total to approximately 2500. We have quadrupled the number of strategy analysts at headquarters who are responsible for producing an analytical product which is shared with policy makers, the intelligence community, and our law enforcement partners.

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These efforts have paid off. Over the last two years, the FBI and our partners, both in the US and abroad, have identified, disrupted, and neutralized more than a hundred terrorist threats and cells. Worldwide, we have apprehended almost 3000 Al Qaeda operatives. We have conducted more than 70 investigations into terrorist money trails, and we have frozen more than \$125 million in assets. And most important, we have not fallen victim to another catastrophic terrorist attack in the United States.

The FBI has made significant changes in our foreign intelligence operations and espionage programs which are our second operational priorities. We have built a nationally directed program for counterintelligence and established speciality squads in each of our 56 field offices. The cybercrime program is our third investigative priority and is again a nationally directed program. In the past year we have opened more than 90 cybercrime investigations involving privacy invasion, child pornography, fraudulent e-commerce activities, and cyber viruses involving 84,000 victims worldwide and exceeding \$162 million in losses. These cases have resulted in 97 arrests and 64 separate indictments for cybercrime offenses.

While terrorism is our top priority and has redefined our mission, the FBI's criminal responsibilities remain an important part of the work we do, and public corruption remains the number one criminal program in the FBI. It is certainly the number one criminal program in the NO office. It is said that money is the root of all evil. While I don't know if that's true, it is at the root of most public corruption – whether legislative, regulatory, judicial or law enforcement.

There is good reason for it being at the top of our list of criminal priorities, and the reason is this: like you, we in the FBI believe that public corruption is among the most serious of criminal violations. It is a betrayal of the public's sacred trust. If allowed to grow, public corruption permeates all aspects of society and affects all other criminal priorities. And if allowed to spread unchecked, public corruption can threaten the very foundation of democracy.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "No man who is corrupt, no man who condones corruption in others, can possibly do his duty by the community." Here Roosevelt identified a truth at the heart of why public corruption is a serious threat to the fabric of our society. Corrupt public officials are inherently compromised, and that corrupt behavior can migrate into every facet of our society. Regardless of their talents and their accomplishments, corrupt officials break down the order, confidence and trust of society. They allow illicit drugs and weapons to flow freely; organized crime to operate with impunity; and open the door for terrorists who threaten our way of life.

To address the PC program in Louisiana, the New Orleans office has two PC squads and my intention is to place a PC squad in the Baton Rouge Resident Agency this summer. The New Orleans office has several ongoing investigations and historically has made significant inroads into the public corruption area. Last year, as the 19th in size of our 56 field offices, the FBI in Louisiana was 10th in public corruption indictments with 24, and number 6 in public corruption convictions. Public corruption in Louisiana has been described to me as epidemic, endemic, and entrenched. No branch of government is exempt. Public corruption investigations are among the most complicated, often requiring years of effort to make a case. That is why working with our partners in law enforcement and civic

organizations, like the Metropolitan Crime Commission, is essential for the successful prosecution of significant cases. Joint investigations with federal, state, and local law enforcement counterparts are conducted whenever possible. Investigations involving public officials must be coordinated in order to ensure that we are able to address sophisticated conspiracies using the best investigative techniques.

Our strategy is to focus public corruption investigations on the most corrosive criminal acts by public officials. I am placing an emphasis on liaison relationships and training to foster focused investigations that will result in significant prosecutions. Our message to those who think they are above the law is that you cannot hide. No matter how long it takes, we will find you, and once the investigation is completed, the USA will prosecute you to the full extent of the law. Aside from deterrence, there are other benefits to these successes. Devotion to the Public Corruption crime problem can lead to enhanced FBI credibility, intelligence, and partnerships. Our recent New Orleans Crime Survey indicated that the FBI is considered the only non-biased organization able to investigate allegations of corruption without potential of reprisal. The respondents to the crime survey expressed their support for the FBI continuing to take the lead in investigations of public corruption. It is a duty that we are honored to fulfill, in cooperation with thousands of honest Metropolitan area police officers and attorneys who want to see these problems addressed.

In Louisiana, in regards to public corruption, you are either part of the solution or you are part of the problem. I want to thank the MCC for being part of the solution. The CC has been instrumental in providing information, either directly or indirectly, to the FBI. We have an outstanding partnership with the MCC and our concerns about PC in Louisiana are reflective.

I am currently discussing with Rafael the expansion of the MCC beyond the New Orleans metropolitan area. We are considering initiating a statewide 800 number to report corruption. This would be an asset for the entire state. I suspect the Crime Commission would garner the same public support throughout the state as it has in the New Orleans area.

Some examples of our successes which are shared with the MCC include an investigation which focused on the illegal issuance of engineering licenses by the former Chairman of the City of New Orleans Board of Examiners for operating engineers. As a direct result of the investigation, more than 20 licenses were identified as having been fraudulently issued either through a direct bribe or through association with the Chairman. The City of New Orleans Department of Safety Permits has conducted an audit of all existing engineering license records and has instituted new procedures to ensure that individuals who hold licenses have demonstrated the proficiency to do so. This case is an example of the partnership that the MCC has with the FBI. Some of the critical information utilized in the investigation came from the MCC.

The MCC also provided information regarding the Orleans Parish School Board. Carl Coleman, the former Risk Manager for the School Board facilitated the payment of approximately 4 million dollars to Jeffrey Pollitt for the purpose of repairs to several fire damaged schools. Coleman and Pollitt have plead guilty in the Eastern District of Louisiana and admitted to bribe payments, cash kickbacks and

other acts in furtherance of the conspiracy. There are additional ongoing Public Corruption investigations, however I am not at liberty to discuss the cases at this time.

The FBI is a relatively small organization, but a determined one. We in the FBI have committed ourselves to making the fundamental changes necessary to combat the terrorists and criminals who target our country. We have made much progress. We are on the right track. Today's FBI will meet and defeat the threats against the security of our nation.

Our system of democracy rests on the belief in justice for all. Citizens must have confidence that, while their government may make mistakes, those mistakes will be examined in the light of the day, and, in the end, be made right.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I thank the Crime Commission for taking such a significant role in promoting an honest governmental environment. Your recognition that public and civic leaders have a responsibility to speak out against public corruption is important to the people of Louisiana.

I want to also thank you for recognizing the Agents who dedicated many hours of their professional and personal lives to the Wrinkled Robe investigation.

I look forward to meeting each of you, either this afternoon or in the near future.