



Department of Justice

REMARKS

BY

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AT THE

DEA ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

TUESDAY, MAY 29, 1990

I am deeply honored to join you for this Memorial Day Observance, and to stand witness today -- for the entire Department of Justice -- as we recognize the selfless sacrifice of Special Agent Rickie C. Finley.

"Who gave his life in the performance of duty" -- reads the Presidential memorial certificate. But let us pause to reflect on the nature of that duty -- and the demands it makes on human lives. Over the long stretch, duty -- as we all know -- means routine and often much tedium. Duty is every detail covered, every endless watch kept, every mission resolutely pursued. But at any moment, in the midst of the routine and the tedium, duty can suddenly confront peril.

We pursue our mission in law enforcement today at a time of more than ordinary peril. American society is under siege -- mainly as a consequence of the drug traffic that has fostered a growing criminal violence. Twice in this past year, DEA agents -- in their valiant efforts to break that siege -- have paid the ultimate price that duty asks.

Last year at this time, we honored Special Agent Everett E. Hatcher, who on February 28, 1989, was found brutally shot to death in his car on a Staten Island stakeout. Agent Hatcher had been working under cover against organized drug traffickers. A massive manhunt was mounted by all components of Justice, as well

as the New York City police, and his murderer was eventually slain by one of his own on the streets of Brooklyn.

On May 20, 1989, just prior to that observance, Special Agent Rickie C. Finley was killed in an airplane crash into the jungles of Peru -- on a flight over the illicit territorial holdings of the Colombian drug cartels. While there is no evidence, or inference, that the aircraft was downed by unfriendly fire, it is right and proper to say that Agent Finley died in the line of duty -- which took him, in pursuit of his mission, into peril in another land.

These two tragic incidents make manifestly clear just how far the drug peril now reaches. Rising criminal enterprise -- plenary in wealth, worldwide in scope -- is utterly without conscience. Drug-lords reckon only in tainted profits, and wreak violence, intimidation, and reckless murder throughout this hemisphere and beyond. Worse, they have raised a spectre of lawlessness in some countries that threatens to prevail over man's better instincts and to subvert the rule of law.

It is no mere happenstance that these two DEA agents died one in a Staten Island meadow, the other in a Peruvian jungle. Rather, the reach of time and place involved in these two events precisely describes the real nature, the true extent, the exact

geography of the danger they faced -- and all in drug law enforcement continue to face on a daily basis.

But let us remember -- even in the face of such far-reaching peril -- what Agents Hatcher and Finley bravely shared together. They both took up their duties as volunteers. Just as so many of you have volunteered for hazardous duty in the relentless fight against the drug lords. As we honor Agent Finley today, along with all those others whose names will be tolled in requiem, we are reminded that such sacrifices can never be assigned, or ordered. They cannot really be asked. They can only be made.

And in homage, we must promise in return that wherever our agents come under threat, we will reach out to protect them. We will act to the full extent of our legal empowerment across any border, in all other lands, around this world. We are obliged by law and by right to take up the cause of all men or women so endangered, or any life so sacrificed. I renew that promise as you hear read today the roll of honor -- name by name -- none of whom shall we ever abandon, either in memory, or so long as justice remains to be done.