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# M E E T   T H E   P R E S S

*America's Press Conference of the Air*

*Produced by*    LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

*Guest:*        RAMSEY CLARK  
                    Attorney General of the United States

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*Panel:*

CARL T. ROWAN, *Chicago Daily News*  
JAMES KILPATRICK, *Washington Star Syndicate*  
RONALD OSTROW, *Los Angeles Times*  
CARL STERN, *NBC News*

*Moderator:*

LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

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## MEET THE PRESS

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**MR. SPIVAK:** When President Johnson recently sent his crime message to Congress, he designated Attorney General Ramsey Clark as coordinator of all federal activity affecting law enforcement. Attorney General Clark is our guest today on **MEET THE PRESS.**

The interview with General Moshe Dayan on Israel, originally announced for today, has been postponed because the General's visit to this country has been postponed.

We will have the first questions now from Carl Stern of NBC News.

**MR. STERN:** Mr. Clark, the Sheriff of Cook County, Illinois, wants an armed posse of one thousand volunteers to guard against disorders at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago this summer. Do you think that would be useful?

**GENERAL CLARK:** The Chicago Police Department, under Superintendent Conlisk,\* is one of the finest police departments in the nation. It has more than 12,000 officers, and I am sure they will be able to contain any situation which might arise whether it is related to the Democratic National Convention or otherwise.

On the other hand, Sheriff Woods of Cook County has an excellent sheriff's department, and they should be well prepared. I think the notion of a posse is an unfortunate way to put it. We need professional law enforcement men, ready for any contingency.

\* James B. Conlisk, Jr.

**MR. STERN:** Do I understand that you will try to talk him out of it?

**GENERAL CLARK:** No.

**MR. STERN:** The Chief of Staff of the Army announced during the week that 15,000 men and seven units have been allocated for riot duty this summer and that an overwhelming display of force will be used to put down riots before they get started. Is that what we need, an overwhelming display of force?

**GENERAL CLARK:** It depends on the circumstances. I think we can prevent riots. Certainly our first responsibility is to prevent riots, and we need to make every possible effort now and every day to see that riots do not occur. If riots get started, then there must be adequate law enforcement presence to contain them, but our experience to date shows that an over-presence of law enforcement, as well as an under-presence, can stimulate a situation that can lead to a riot. It balances the greater need.

**MR. STERN:** I understand that maps of electrical systems and sewer systems in large cities are being distributed to these units. Are we to infer from this that there is a possibility of much more sophisticated action and perhaps even sabotage?

**GENERAL CLARK:** There is no indication at this time that there is going to be any sabotage. We have had riots or riot conditions for a number of years now, and there has been nothing that approaches a sabotage effort. We do need to be prepared. We will be prepared. Law enforcement has made great progress over the last year in being prepared for riots, but we can cause riots by fear itself, and by an over-concern. The greater need today is to work on prevention.

**MR. STERN:** You now have a computer upstairs and downstairs from your office at the Justice Department. Can you now predict where riots are going to occur?

**GENERAL CLARK:** We have only the one computer; it is downstairs. We have a unit upstairs that has a line from the computer. Prediction won't be any easier this summer than it has been in the past, because these are highly capricious happenings, by and large.

(announcements)

**MR. ROWAN:** Mr. Attorney General, yesterday in effect you threatened to jail anyone who, through civil disobedience, disrupts the governmental activities of the nation's capital.

Was this a direct warning to the Reverend Martin Luther King?

**GENERAL CLARK:** The news story to which you refer resulted from an interview that I had earlier in the week in which I said that civil disobedience, which violates the law—if that is not redundant—which interferes with government or its processes or the free movement of the citizens of a city, will be met with adequate law enforcement, and whoever engages in that conduct will be arrested. This is not a direct threat at anyone, but a mere statement as to law enforcement purpose in this city.

**MR. ROWAN:** Is this a signal of a real get-tough policy in Justice with regard to violence?

**GENERAL CLARK:** It was not intended as such. We have to work with a constant firmness and fairness, I hope, and both without fear. I don't believe it is for law enforcement to be tough one day and soft the next, and I am not sure that either phrase or word means much. We will enforce the law firmly and fairly.

**MR. ROWAN:** In a Chicago speech yesterday, Cyrus Vance, former Deputy Secretary of Defense and President Johnson's favorite troubleshooter, told lawyers that every city must prepare for mass arrests, for more detention facilities and speedier court procedures. This seems to suggest that somebody is looking for a lot of arrests this summer. Was this speech cleared with the Justice Department?

**GENERAL CLARK:** No, it wasn't; nor am I sure that it necessarily suggests what you say. Mr. Vance had a very trying and sad experience in Detroit. He realized the great burdens that can be imposed upon a judicial system should a riot occur. He was speaking to a group of lawyers. He knows how important it is that justice be efficient, that it be effective and that it be swift, and we know from the riots, the several big riots that have occurred, how slow it has been. This is an important area. Every city has to be prepared, but, foremost, we all have to work in the field of prevention. We can prevent riots, and that is our burden today.

**MR. OSTROW:** Mr. Attorney General, the FBI seems less successful in gathering intelligence on militant black power groups than it was with the Communist Party and the Ku Klux Klan. Why is this?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I wouldn't say that they are less successful. I would say that this perhaps presents the most difficult intelligence and investigation problem that law enforcement in the United States has ever faced. Let's remember that they have worked for years on the Communist Party, and they have done a magnificent job. Let's remember that they have worked too

on the Ku Klux Klan, and they have done an outstanding job. Here it is only in the last few years that a massive intelligence and investigation effort has been undertaken, and it's a very difficult one. It pervades many parts of the United States, and it requires great manpower. I think they are well on top of the situation now and learning more daily.

**MR. OSTROW:** Reports persist of foreign involvement, even direction, in some of the urban riots and the anti-war demonstrations. Is there any basis to these reports?

**GENERAL CLARK:** No factual basis for the reports has been presented to us. Whether there is a factual basis or not remains to be seen. Certainly there cannot be any great factual basis for it or evidence would have come to light. I think we have to look to the conditions of the cities—highly inflammable. The real poverty and the real misery and the real anger that exist there are the basic cause of the turbulence in our cities today.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Mr. Attorney General, in his recent message on crime, the President devoted a significant passage to narcotics laws. In recent months there has been a considerable controversy about marihuana and its dangers. Some authorities appear to take the view that that is a non-addictive drug no more risky, really, to society than tobacco or whiskey. What is your own view on marihuana?

**GENERAL CLARK:** My own view is that the use of marihuana or the sale of marihuana is a federal crime, and we will investigate and prosecute where that use or sale is found. I also think in our time, and particularly among our youth, that an atmosphere of permissiveness is a danger, a clear and present danger to our kids, and that marihuana is so frequently coupled with LSD and other highly dangerous drugs that we have to enforce very effectively in this field to protect those youth from themselves and to protect our society.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Under present law, as I understand it, the mere possession of marihuana is a felony punishable by two to ten years in prison. In his message of the 7th, the President asked for new laws to make LSD and other dangerous drugs, the possession of these, a misdemeanor.

Does this contemplate that the present law as to possession of marihuana will be reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor? **GENERAL CLARK:** Not necessarily. There is certainly nothing in the message to that direction, nor is there any intention in the Administration. We think clearly we need a federal law to make possession of LSD and other dangerous drugs a federal crime.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** A misdemeanor or a felony?

**GENERAL CLARK:** We need to raise the penalty also on sale, but about five years seems to be an adequate penalty for those crimes at this time.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** For the possession of either LSD or marihuana, you would advocate a five-year prison term?

**GENERAL CLARK:** There is an adequate statute for marihuana now. There will be no new bill proposed. I am talking only of LSD and similarly dangerous hallucinents.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Do you anticipate any resistance in the Congress to the reorganization plan that will transfer these several bureaus to your administration, in the field of narcotics control?

**GENERAL CLARK:** That consolidation has been so long needed and seems so obvious to me that I do not expect any serious difficulty. We have lost in terms of effectiveness and we have lost in terms of efficiency. This will make a major difference in federal enforcement capabilities in the narcotics and dangerous drugs field, and I think April 8th will be an important date for the nation. That will be the day that this reorganization becomes law.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Attorney General, there have been reports of a sharp increase in gun sales throughout the country. Has your department any evidence that firearms are being stockpiled for use in next summer's riots?

**GENERAL CLARK:** There is no evidence that there is any substantial stockpiling around the nation of firearms for riot or other purposes. There has been some accumulation of weapons. There has been an over-abundance of unnecessary firearms in many parts of our cities. This is the reason that the Administration, for a number of years now, has worked so ardently for a federal firearms control statute. This is imperative to us for a good many reasons, and certainly the potential troubles of our cities is a major one.

**MR. SPIVAK:** You say there has been a sharp increase in gun sales throughout the country?

**GENERAL CLARK:** No, I didn't say that, I believe. You said that.

**MR. SPIVAK:** I asked the question.

**GENERAL CLARK:** There has probably been some increase in gun sales. We know of no substantial or sharp increase.

**MR. STERN:** Turning to Vietnam war dissent, on the 13th of December you indicated you were not yet convinced that Dr. Spock and his friends had done anything beyond symbolic ex-

pression. Yet three weeks later you obtained an indictment against him. What made you change your mind?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I don't check my calendar before these performances, and I am not sure what I may have said or how I may have said it on December 13th. Certainly on December 13th I was fully aware that a major investigation was under way. I had not at that time, apparently, from what you say, reviewed the evidence, which I did later.

**MR. STERN:** There seems to be a policy here of going after the Pied Pipers of the anti-draft movement. Is that the idea?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I wouldn't think of them as Pied Pipers so much as major conspirators and ringleaders. I am not referring to any particular individuals. I don't think I should do that.

**MR. ROWAN:** Getting back to the outlook for this summer, doesn't the massing of guns or armored cars, all this talk of poses, create the probability that it could provoke just the guerrilla warfare we are trying to prevent?

**GENERAL CLARK:** Let's be sure we know there is such a massing of armored cars and guns and things. I think we do a lot more talking than the facts would support about that. I am inclined to agree with your basic point though. I think we have to have an optimistic view. I think we have to be fully prepared for the worst, but we have to recognize the truth, that we can avoid the riots; we can prevent riots; and it is awfully important to these United States that we do everything within our power now to that end.

**MR. ROWAN:** A leading Detroit black nationalist, a Negro minister said to me recently, "The white man in this country has about decided on genocide as the only way to silence the black man's revolt." When we talk about poses and brandish a lot of weapons and talk about 15,000 armored troops, aren't we lending credibility to these cries of genocide?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I wouldn't say that it rose to that dimension at all. I think it is important that people know that there is adequate law enforcement to protect their lives and their property, and that is the fact. At the same time, I think it is more important that the people realize that the purposes of the law are generous and good to all of our citizens, and we are working toward open housing, as—the Congress will look at that major legislation Tuesday. We are looking toward the protection of all the rights of all Americans, wherever they may be violated.

**MR. ROWAN:** Some people say there is one very critical dis-

advantage to this show of force. They say it deludes the businessman, the industrialist, the power structure, into believing that they don't have to change anything; they don't have to erase any injustices, because the Justice Department and the cops will take care of the Negro.

Do you think that this is a danger?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I don't think that is a danger. Were it the fact, it would be tragic because clearly America has a very major building job to do in its cities, and law enforcement can only maintain the public peace for so long when conditions are intolerable. We have to build in our cities, and we have to provide equal opportunity for all Americans. We have got to work diligently, but our prospects are excellent if we can only have faith in this country for a few years while we rebuild.

**MR. OSTROW:** Mr. Attorney General, the big surprise in the President's special crime message was the federal anti-riot bill. The Republicans say that you should have introduced that bill last year when such a measure was debated and passed by the House. Why didn't you?

**GENERAL CLARK:** There was a bill before the House last year and no need at that time for the Administration to get in. As we have looked at our comprehensive crime program to present to the Congress this year, it became the judgment of the Department of Justice and we recommended to the President that he include this moderate anti-riot measure. It carefully balances two things: First, federal and local responsibilities, and it is premised on the belief that law enforcement in the United States has to be primarily a local responsibility. It always has been, always must be.

It also contains or will contain, as it is presented to the Congress, a balance between the rights of the individual and his freedom of speech and the public safety. It is not a major piece of legislation, but it is a piece of legislation that can add to the safety in these very trying times.

**MR. OSTROW:** You have said you don't expect the law to produce many prosecutions, is that correct?

**GENERAL CLARK:** That is correct.

**MR. OSTROW:** There is so much concern being voiced over its implications for free speech, why push it at this time?

**GENERAL CLARK:** We push it at this time because we need to know that we have an adequate investigative base to build intelligence, to build investigation, and also we need to know, if people actually do move in interstate commerce, if they cause firearms to be shipped or carried in interstate commerce—and,

after all, that was part of our firearms legislation last year—or if they themselves move in commerce with the purpose of causing a riot and participating in a riot, that the Federal Government can move to prosecute them for that conduct.

**MR. OSTROW:** I see you have been meeting with the big city police chiefs in recent weeks discussing riot prevention and control. What have they asked of you as a representative of the Federal Government? What have they asked from you that you didn't do last summer?

**GENERAL CLARK:** They have asked us to give them all the support we can in areas of intelligence. They are concerned about intelligence because this is very difficult, and they want to know exactly what our capabilities to provide them with support, should they need it, are.

On the other hand, these chiefs of police of 122 cities have, by their own evaluation, spent more than ninety per cent of these conferences—five full days—on prevention, and they recognize, and they are working for prevention and not control, because they believe, I think, that riots can be prevented and that riots can be prevented in their cities, and they know the critical need for excellence in police-community relations, and they are working on that.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Deservedly or undeservedly, Mr. Attorney General, you seem to have acquired a reputation in certain quarters as a man who is, as they say, soft on crime. Parade Magazine, several months ago, remarked that you had lost the respect of police officers around the nation. How do you respond to these criticisms?

**GENERAL CLARK:** We will have to ask the police officers of the nation about that. I can't speak for them. I do my duty as I see it, and I don't believe there is a place for either toughness or softness. We are a government of laws and not of men. It is my judgment—my duty is to enforce the laws fairly and firmly, and I endeavor to do so.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Is a part of this reputation the result of your view on wiretapping and electronic surveillance?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I would say that the view stems from my known position on wiretapping, electronic surveillance; on the meaning of confessions in law enforcement; perhaps on the death penalty and perhaps a few other subjects.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** In June 1957 you issued a directive on wiretapping that required the head of every investigative agency of the Federal Government to get your permission in advance before certain communications were intercepted.

**How many such requests have you approved since June?**

**GENERAL CLARK:** They have been running about 20 a month, I would say. We haven't noticed any great inhibition among the agencies to ask for authorization, as they have needed it. These are not actual wiretappings as you know; these are not wiretapping or electronic surveillances in the national security areas. These are lawful uses of devices that you are talking about, not unlawful uses.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Mr. Attorney General, one of the things I think people are most concerned and worried about in this country today is crime on the streets. Which of the President's proposals to Congress do you think is most likely to help cure that situation quickly?

**GENERAL CLARK:** Clearly the most urgent need in terms of crime in the street is building local law enforcement, building local police. The Safe Streets and Crime Control Act that the President, President Johnson has submitted to the Congress for these two years now offers the best chance that we have to build local law enforcement. We spend far too little of our resources on the public safety. We have got to pay policemen more salaries—better salaries; we have got to have better training for policemen. We have got to bring science and research to provide instruments for law enforcement that are effective, and the Safe Streets and Crime Control Act will do that.

**MR. SPIVAK:** Gentlemen, we have about three minutes.

**MR. STERN:** Your office supposedly worked out an agreement with Draft Director General Lewis Hershey that draft dissenters would be prosecuted if they broke the law and that they were not to be summarily punished by accelerative induction. The General said there was no such agreement. Was there?

**GENERAL CLARK:** There was a joint statement that was released and has been compiled with, as far as I know.

**MR. STERN:** You say the General is living up to that agreement?

**GENERAL CLARK:** Yes, I know of no one whose draft status has been accelerated because of some statement or protest that he might have made.

**MR. ROWAN:** Mr. Attorney General, are you convinced that the FBI is not bugging the offices, hotel rooms, bedrooms, of American citizens, except in national security cases or cases approved by you?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I am absolutely convinced of that.

**MR. ROWAN:** There is a notion abroad in the land that J. Edgar Hoover is a law unto himself, that he is untouchable as far

as any Attorney General is concerned, that neither you nor any recent Attorney General has dared to try to exercise your on-paper jurisdiction. Is this true or an old wife's tale?

**GENERAL CLARK:** It can be characterized—certainly not as an old wife's tale. He has a certain independence, and that is important. He has an immense responsibility in investigation, and it is not necessary that the Attorney General be involved with every investigation that the FBI makes or that his prosecutors be so involved, but he has never failed to comply with any request or order that I have made as Attorney General or to be less than fully cooperative.

**MR. OSTROW:** Mr. Clark, can we turn to New Orleans and District Attorney Garrison's investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Do you still believe that he has turned up nothing new, no new evidence?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I have seen nothing new. The findings of the Warren Commission are supported by an immense quantity of evidence. I know of no investigation in history that was more comprehensive or any facts in history that are better supported by the evidence than those of the Warren Commission.

**MR. OSTROW:** Why doesn't the federal government then take Mr. Garrison to court for violating the civil rights of Clay Shaw and others he has implicated there?

**GENERAL CLARK:** This is a free country and local authorities have their responsibility. It is a rare, rare case where any local authority has been prosecuted by the federal government for violation of citizens rights. It has been almost exclusively in brutality cases, actual physical violence directed toward citizens.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** Mr. Attorney General, it is reported that a bill will be introduced in the Senate very shortly dealing with the problem of Communists who may be employed in defense production or war production factories. Do you have a view on such legislation?

**GENERAL CLARK:** I am not familiar with the legislation that you refer to.

**MR. KILPATRICK:** This would be an amendment dealing with internal security, providing greater authority for the Subversive Activities Control Board to conduct hearings and investigations in the area of persons who may be Communists, employed in defense establishments.

**GENERAL CLARK:** I am not familiar with any great need that we have in that area. Certainly if there are military secrets

involved, it is imperative that Communists not be involved in that area of work.

**MR. SPIVAK:** I am sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you, Mr. Attorney General, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

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