



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

September 21, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Ashcroft".

SUBJECT: Disseminating Information to Enhance Public Safety and National Security

The events of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, have shaken each and every one of us. The pain of the nation's loss has been felt throughout the Department. I want to thank and commend each and every employee for the outstanding dedication and compassion you have shown to the great people of this nation. Unfortunately, the risk to public safety and our national security have not yet abated. Our way of life continues to be threatened by diabolical enemies of freedom.

It is the utmost priority of the Department to protect the public safety and to enhance our national security. Effective immediately, I am therefore directing that information within the control of the Department and any of its components that:

- exposes a credible threat to the life, health, or safety of any individual, or community, or to the national security interests of the United States; or
- might otherwise enhance the public safety or the national security interests of the U.S. if more widely disseminated beyond your component;

be made available at the earliest possible moment to the appropriate federal, state, and local officials in order to increase the possibility that any threatened action can be disrupted or prevented, or to assist such other federal, state, or local authorities, where possible.

Undoubtedly, information of this type may also be relevant to criminal investigators, either for the opening of a new matter, or as part of a pending investigation. Obviously, such investigations should continue to be pursued. However, the pursuit of a criminal investigation, the zeal to obtain a conviction, or the desire to protect from compromise a source of information, should not delay the release of any information that could be used to enhance the safety of the American people or the national security of the United States.