

Today, the Justice Department seems at the base of some dark crevasse, and when beams of light flow into it, what we see always causes a shudder. Far from being the gatekeeper of the nation's legality and the custodian of its ethics, the Justice Department has emerged as the single most corrupt institution on the Washington landscape. The fact that Bush's first attorney general will soon appear before Congress to explain how he secured a fantastically profitable no-bid contract from a particularly suspect and highly political U.S. attorney can serve as a summary for the entire sordid mess in which the department finds itself. And yet John Ashcroft looks like a moral paragon compared with what followed.

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