

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF THE CHIEFS OF POLICE

THE FOUNTAINEBLEAU HOTEL

11:35 A.M. EDT

Chief Clement, Director Kelley, Mayor Rosen, officers, Directors of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Reverend Clergy, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a very high honor and a very great privilege to be with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and I congratulate Chief Ed Davis of Los Angeles, your new President.

Later this week I will sign legislation that reflects the will of a grateful people and their Government.

It will demonstrate the esteem of a free society, its 600,000 sworn law enforcement officers and others entrusted with our public safety. I refer to legislation, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act of 1976, which will pay \$50,000 to the survivors of any public safety officer who loses his or her life in the line of duty.

No amount of money can fill the void left by the courageous officers whomake the supreme sacrifice. What we will do is assure their next of kin of appropriate benefitsfor their lifetime.

As your President I will sign this law on behalf of every grateful American. So, let me add the United States of America salutes all the men and women who so devotedly serve their nation and their fellow citizens.

We must respond to the suffering of all the victims of crime in our society. Considering the great emphasis now placed on the rights of the accused, we must pay more attention to the rights of the victim of crime.

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I am shocked, I am angered that our older and less advantaged citizens are too often brutally victimized day after day after day. It is equally shocking that the Congress has failed to act on my proposal to provide compensation for the victims of Federal crimes.

I have urged that similar action be taken by State Governments. Seventeen States have enacted crime compensation legislation and a number of others are considering such statutes.

No President and no police chief can preserve domestic tranquility without cooperation, the cooperation of American citizens, America's neighborhoods and America's communities. That is why I address myself to all Americans who are determined to act against crime.

The cost of crime in America has been estimated at \$97 billion a year, almost as much as the entire defense budget. But even that figure, high as it is, does not take into full account the terrible impact of crime on our society.

We cannot count in dollars, we cannot count in cents, the loss of a single citizen who is murdered, the humiliation of one who is raped, the pain of one who is assaulted.

We cannot calculate the cost to a free society when people are forced to barricade themselves in their homes.

Study after study has shown that crime is not the work of many offenders but of a relatively small number of chronic law-breakers who have chosen crime as a career.

The career criminal is a one-man crime wave. He commits between 50 and 80 percent of all serious crimes.

In Washington, D.C. one man recently confessed to 50 rapes, 80 burglaries, ten armed robberies and more stolen cars than he could remember. The LEAA has reported that 49 criminals, unbelievably acting individually, committed over 10,500 crimes.

If we can bring the career criminal to a speedy trial, try him for his most serious rather than least serious offense, and make sure that if found guilty he is sent to prison, we can give the streets back to the people of the United States.

I do not advocate vigilante action, but I do advocate swift and certain justice.

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You in this great audience know the criminals. Their names appear on police blotters and court dockets every day. They have been on probation in halfway houses and on parole. They have every chance for rehabilitation but nothing has worked.

It is no encroachment on the presumption of innocence to identify those whose business is crime. Our job is to put them out of business -- the sooner the better.

Two years ago I outlined to this Association a career criminal program.

Under the auspices of LEAA we targeted 12 jurisdictions for an initial demonstration. In the last 16 months those jurisdictions have singled out more than 2,000 career criminals with an average of five prior convictions apiece -- not five arrests, but five convictions apiece.

New cases involving these habitual offenders were assigned to special units of the District Attorneys offices.

Every right of the accused was protected, including the right to a speedy trial. With absolutely no plea bargaining for lesser offenders, the prosecutors achieved dramatic results.

Of those 2,000 defendants, 95 percent were convicted. The average time between arrests and final sentencing was only 84 days. The average sentence for those convicted was 20 years in prison in most areas. The crime rate demonstrably went down. That is success.

I have directed the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to significantly expand the scope of this program, to include not only more prosecutors' offices but police and correctional organizations as well. In the next fiscal year the number of Federally-funded career criminal jurisdictions will be more than doubled. I urge States and local Governments to expand this effective program with your own resources as well.

The national trend is that less than 10 percent of those convicted spend any time in jail. This is intolerable and indefensible.

Our constitution reserves jurisdiction over most crimes to States and local authorities, but in offenses where the Constitution gives jurisdiction to the Federal Government and, therefore, gives the President some say in the matter -- kidnapping, hijacking, trafficking in hard drugs and Federal crimes involving use of dangerous weapons -- I have proposed mandatory sentences. If convicted, they go to jail.

We are going to stop letting convicted criminals go free. That is the way to deter crime and protect the victims of crime.

Law enforcement officers have the primary responsibility for fighting violent crime, but crime is so pervasive it can be brought under control only by concerted action at all levels of Government -- Federal, State and local -- and by the cooperation of law-abiding citizens and police volunteer groups.

I am greatly encouraged by the revival of public cooperation with the police and the confidence you have instilled in every neighborhood of your community. The police officer has become a catalyst for responsible Government and I commend you and I congratulate you.

I have heard of individuals, especially in rural and suburban areas, who use CB radios in their cars to assist the police. This is a lot better use of CB than frustrating highway patrol cars. I commend this new breed of CB cooperators for recognizing Smoky Bear as the real friend of law-abiding citizens.

Two years ago, I made a solemn pledge to you, the police chiefs, that a high priority in my Administration would be the control of crime, especially violent crime.

Since 1974, we have been making real progress. In 1974, the crime rate had increased by a staggering 18 percent over the previous year. By 1975, we had cut the rate of increase in half, to 9 percent.

The statistics for the first six months of this year saw the increase in the rate of crime reduced to about 3 percent. Even better, the new figures reveal that the rate of violent crime has actually decreased for the first time in many, many years. The violent crimes of murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault increased 6 percent in the first six months of 1976. I congratulate you, but we are going to do better in the future.

There is a new and wonderful attitude in America. Americans who have reverence for the law are fighting back. We must not stop until we tear away the shroud of fear from every corner of America to control rural and suburban crime, as well as that in the big cities.

The criminal justice system cannot, by itself, control crime. Further reduction of the crime rate requires the involvement of all of our fellow Americans.

The family and the neighborhood are our best defenses against crime. Family responsibility, not Government programs, is the best way to make sure children are properly nurtured, the elderly are cared for, our cultural and spiritual heritage preserved, and our laws respected. The police can do little to curb juvenile delinquency without the family's full cooperation.

We hear more about the rights of juvenile defenders or offenders than about the right of their victims. Forty-five percent of all violent crime is now perpetrated by juveniles. If they are big enough to commit vicious crimes against society, they are big enough to be punished by society.

Too many violent and street-wise juveniles are using their age as a cloak of immunity. Detention may not help the juvenile, but it will certainly help his potential victims.

Genuine job opportunities for young people provide a constructive alternative to crime. We are making progress in this area, and we will do better as our economy continues to improve. If rehabilitation is to become a reality instead of the pretense that it is today, the private sector must do more to provide jobs for those who have paid their debt to society.

In my crime message to the Congress, I called for a comprehensive Federal Criminal Code to serve as a model for State and local Governments. I called for mandatory minimum sentences for certain Federal crimes and for violent repeat offenders.

I called for legislation increasing the number of Federal judges.

I called for the compensation of the victims of Federal crime.

The Congress has done nothing. Too many politicians today are underestimating the public concern about crime. Just as the police identify career criminals, American voters will examine their ballots in November and identify those candidates who have demonstrated indifference or permissiveness toward crime, and they should.

I serve notice today that a top priority of the first 100 days, beginning with Inauguration Day for the Ford Administration next January, will be the rallying of America behind Federal anti-crime legislation.

I ask every police chief in America and every citizen to join in that crusade.

I recommend strict controls and more stringent penalties to stamp out the threat of political terrorism which is totally alien to American ideals.

In addition, I ask all athletes, amateur and professional, to help our young people. Our athletes in America can score high by providing youth with alternatives to crime. Kids who are playing football, baseball, basketball and tennis are not kids committing crimes against society. Heroes of sports instead of criminals are the models for youngsters to look up to. I have directed my Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, in partnership with States and local authorities and private organizations, to promote team play rather than foul play, and we will.

The Federal Government shares direct responsibility for organized crime, white collar crime and official corruption. The Department of Justice has made great strides in combatting this kind of crime.

To insure that this Federal effort is fully coordinated, I will establish an interagency council on crime. It will include the heads of all Federal agencies operating programs involved with crime. It will be directed by the Attorney General of the United States, who will do a first-class job.

One of the first jobs of the council will be to review the policies of major domestic agencies and recommend changes to lower the crime rate. The council will develop a comprehensive 5-year plan for crime control and criminal justice through the Federal Government.

We all know, tragic as it is, as much as one-half of all street crime today is committed by drug addicts to support their habit.

Since taking office:

-- I have reorganized our programs and priorities to make maximum use of our anti-drug resources at the Federal level.

-- I met with the heads of State of Mexico, Colombia and Turkey to secure their cooperation in the international war on drugs.

-- I proposed legislation which would close the loopholes that permit drug traffickers to prey on the young.

-- I directed the Internal Revenue Service to reinstitute and emphasize a tax enforcement program aimed at high-level drug traffickers. Since then, the IRS, aided by the Drug Enforcement Administration, has identified over 375 suspected big-time pushers for intensive investigation and action.

-- And I called for more than three-quarters of a billion dollars in a year, a single 12-month period, to finance the fight against drug abuse.

For every young person who dies of drug overuse, and there were almost 5,000 of them last year, there are thousands more who did not die but can only go through the motions of living.

We are making progress. Total Federal seizures of drugs and arrests of drug traffickers are up sharply over previous years. Cooperation among Federal agencies is far, far better.

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But our ability to deal with drugs depends, to a large extent, on the cooperation of other governments to work with us.

Because Mexico today is the major source of heroin entering the United States, the first foreign head of State with whom I discussed narcotic control cooperation was the President of Mexico. And last Friday, I met with the new President-elect of Mexico. He has assured me that during his 6-year term as President of that country, he will give the United States full cooperation in this problem.

The record shows that with the continuing and growing support of the Government of Mexico, we can drastically curtail this source of drugs in the next year, and in the next year.

I call upon States and local Governments to move forward with us until we bring the drug traffic under control, and I believe as I see the reasons of this wonderful organization here representing not only local but State and international chiefs of police, we have a great opportunity to work together to do the job for the people throughout this world, and let's do it.

You know better than I, because you see it every day on the streets of your cities or in the areas of your States, crime is a terrible, terrible enemy to all of us but we can beat it, and we will beat it.

But victory requires a continued clear and predictable policy.

It requires real reverence for the law.

I know that I can count on you and millions of others -- millions and millions of law-abiding Americans -- who believe with you and me, with us, that by fighting crime we are building freedom for all Americans.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 12 NOON, EDT)