

I asked President Castro if he was concerned that people might think Cuba had been involved with Oswald. He said, "Yes, we were concerned."

President Castro gave an elaborate description of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He described how Cuba initially bought its weapons from Belgium, a NATO country, to avoid inciting the United States. But the second Belgian shipment was sabotaged and blown up on Havana's docks, Castro said, and he eventually arranged to buy Soviet arms. President Castro said former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev made a mistake in not describing the missiles as defensive weapons and in "getting into a game of definitions" instead of simply maintaining his right to install weapons without question. President Castro noted the United States had weapons at the time in Turkey and Italy. He described his hunting trip in Russia with Khrushchev, and how Khrushchev had pulled out and read from a letter to Kennedy. When Khrushchev read a passage about Kennedy promising to pull U.S. missiles out of Turkey and Italy, President Castro said, Khrushchev realized he had made a mistake in revealing that Khrushchev was going to breach his deal with Castro and remove the Cuban missiles. That would leave Cuba vulnerable to U.S. invasion, in President Castro's view.

In the end, President Castro said, the Russian withdrawal also served Cuba's purpose. "We preferred the risk of invasion to the presence of Soviet troops, because it would have established an image [of Cuba] as a Soviet base."

President Castro told us about various assassination attempts against him by the United States since 1959, some documented by the U.S. Senate's Church Committee. Plans were launched to poison President Castro's milk shake, to plant an exploding cigar and to blow him up. "Some of them were childish," he said. President Castro said he had survived largely "as a matter of luck."

I asked him how he felt about being the target of so many assassination attempts.

President Castro replied, "Do you play any sports?"

I said, "I play squash every day."

He said, "That is my sport."

Throughout the evening, the Cuban President frequently dispatched an aide or minister in the wee hours to produce a document or find an official's name. The aides performed their research in short order. In one case, President Castro wanted the name of a U.S. Senator who had visited Cuba in 1977, which turned out to be former Sen. Lowell Weicker of Connecticut.

The next morning—or, more accurately, later Thursday morning—we met with Cardinal Ortega. Like Dr. Miller of the Havana synagogue, Cardinal Ortega also said the Cuban regime had adopted a more open attitude

toward religion, from the previous "climate of fear." He attributed the thaw in the government's position to a recognition that it was not easy to erase religious faith. He noted there have always been diplomatic relations between Havana and the Vatican.

As for living conditions in Cuba under Castro, the Cardinal said the obvious in noting widespread poverty. On human rights, he said the Castro regime always equates human rights as the right to health, study and education, a low threshold.

Our visit was facilitated by the assistance and cooperation of the U.S. team and the Cuban government.

#### CHILD ACCESS PREVENTION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, as the 1999 school year came to a close, our Nation was shocked by the incidences of school violence that claimed so many lives. In the aftermath of these tragedies, Americans have become more sensitized to the dangers of guns and the easy access that children have to them. Yet, despite this additional scrutiny by parents, guns continue to claim the lives of young people. Each day, more children are dying, not just in schoolyards, but in the home. They are killed by guns in unintentional shootings.

Unintentional shootings are among the leading causes of death for young people. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, each day at least one person under the age of 19 is killed by an unintentional shooting. Unsafe guns are an enormous danger to these young people, who are the victims of 33 percent of all accidental firearm deaths. And in Michigan, people under the age of 19 make up more than 50 percent of the fatalities caused by unintentional shootings.

Unintentional shootings almost always occur at home, when a child finds a loaded weapon and while playing with it, shoots himself, a sibling, or a young friend. Some parents try to take precautions against these tragedies by hiding their firearm in a drawer, a closet or even under the mattress. Unfortunately, if it is loaded or without a safety lock, it does not matter where that gun is hidden. It has the potential to kill, and for hundreds of kids each year, it does just that.

Daily shootings resulting from the careless storage of guns can easily be prevented. Locking devices for guns are simple to handle and inexpensive, but they must be used. In the Juvenile Justice bill that passed the Senate just a few weeks ago, an amendment was included that would require all sales, deliveries or transfers of handguns to include a secure gun storage or safety device, which was a step in the right direction. But, there was nothing to require that adults, especially with children in the house, use those safety devices. Safe storage laws, or Child Ac-

cess Prevention, CAP, laws are needed to ensure that adults store loaded guns with safety devices in place and in locations reasonably inaccessible to children.

There is no doubt that owning a firearm requires precaution and responsibility, especially when young children are around. CAP laws hold adults criminally responsible if a loaded firearm was left where it could be reasonably accessed by a juvenile, and the juvenile uses or brings into public the adult's firearm without the permission of his parent or guardian. Criminal liability would not apply to adults who have no reasonable expectation of having a juvenile on their premises or if a juvenile obtains a firearm as a result of an unlawful entry. CAP laws simply require adults to use common sense safety measures, such as secure gun storage devices or trigger locks for their firearms.

Currently, there are 16 States that have enacted CAP laws. And since the first law took effect 10 years ago, state CAP laws have reduced unintentional deaths of children by firearms on an average of 23 percent. In Florida, just one year after CAP was enacted, unintentional shootings dropped more than 50 percent. And for every state that has enacted a safe storage law, there is compelling evidence that because of CAP, children are safer at home.

Despite these successes, there are still an overwhelming number of states, including Michigan, without CAP laws. And until there is awareness that guns should be locked up and stored unloaded, guns will continue to claim the lives of innocent children. Until CAP or safe storage laws are the law of the land, people will continue to learn the hard way that the guns in their home meant for protection will continue to claim the lives of those they are trying to protect.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 23, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,594,431,506,414.50 (Five trillion, five hundred ninety-four billion, four hundred thirty-one million, five hundred six thousand, four hundred fourteen dollars and fifty cents).

One year ago, June 23, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,500,927,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred billion, nine hundred twenty-seven million).

Five years ago, June 23, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,598,158,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred ninety-eight billion, one hundred fifty-eight million).

Ten years ago, June 23, 1989, the Federal debt stood at \$2,780,957,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred eighty billion, nine hundred fifty-seven million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$2 trillion—\$2,813,474,506,414.50 (Two trillion, eight hundred thirteen billion,