

Remarks to Mayors and Law Enforcement Officials April 14, 1994

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, as some of you may know, early this morning two American helicopters, flying in northern Iraq as part of Operation Provide Comfort to provide humanitarian relief to the Kurdish population there, were mistakenly shot down in a tragic accident by two United States jet fighters who thought they were Iraqi helicopters illegally in the area.

This is a terrible tragedy for the families involved and for the people in the Armed Forces who have courageously tried to protect the Kurds for many years now. And I would like to ask that, since so many of you put your lives on the line every day, we open this ceremony with a moment of silent prayer for those who lost their lives, their families, and their loved ones.

[After a moment of silence, the following persons made brief remarks: Mayor Jerry Abramson of Louisville, KY; Sgt. Marc Lawson of the Atlanta, GA, Police Department; Mayor Sharpe James of Newark, NJ; Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, IL; and Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles, CA.]

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mayor Riordan, Mayor Abramson, Mayor James, Mayor Daley. Sergeant Lawson, you gave a great talk today, and you represented people in law enforcement very well, and we thank you especially for being here. To Attorney General Reno and the other Federal officials who are here, all the distinguished mayors, the leaders of our law enforcement organizations, and all of you in law enforcement, I thank those of you on the front lines of fighting the crime problem for coming here to Washington today to urge Congress to pass the crime bill now and without delay.

Behind me stand people who represent, not only by their own courageous deeds but by the uniforms they wear, the heroes of law enforcement who stand behind all the rest of us every day, people who wake up every morning, put on a uniform, and put their lives on the line to protect our safety. There are nearly 100 of them from every State in America. They do good work. They can not only catch criminals,

they can prevent crime. And that's why we want to put another 100,000 like them on our streets over the next 5 years.

Last week, I was in communities all across America like those represented here today. The Attorney General was, too. And everywhere people wanted to talk about the crime problem, about the violence, about the tearing away of the future of so many children's lives.

When you go to Capitol Hill today, tell Congress that the people you and I work for have waited long enough. The people don't care about amendments that could slow the process down. They don't want partisan bickering. They want the bill certainly to be reviewed carefully and to be honestly debated, but this is not a problem, as Mayor Riordan so eloquently said, that the American people see in terms of partisan advantages.

Nearly one-third of all American families—Democrats, Republicans, and independents, whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, you name it—all of us, we share a common curse: In the most wonderful country in the world, we have the highest violent crime rate, the largest percentage of our people behind bars, cities where young people in gangs are often better armed than the police forces who are supposed to protect the rest of the citizens. We can do better than this, and this crime bill is a very good start. Ask Congress simply to give you the tools you need to do your job.

The 100,000 new police officers is a 5-year goal. But I have made it clear to Congress that if they will go ahead and pass this bill now, even though it's mid-April, I will cut through the bureaucracy and the redtape to make sure that 20,000 of those new officers are hired, trained, and ready to go to work within the first year of this bill.

More police officers on the street, in the neighborhoods, relating to the people who live there, properly trained and properly deployed, will lower the crime rate. In Los Angeles—he was too modest to mention this, but after the earthquake, Mayor Riordan and Chief Williams responded to a potentially explosive situation by increasing police presence on the street, increasing contact with the community. And there was

instead of an increase in the crime rate, which was perfectly predictable, a dramatic decrease in the crime rate. The Los Angeles Times said it helped keep criminals off the street in record numbers. The people of L.A. rose to the occasion because they saw the police in their communities, they knew they were not alone, and they knew it was a problem that, together, they could deal with.

No matter how many more police we put into our communities, we also know that we have to do something about the relatively small percentage of our criminal population who commit the dangerous, violent crimes repeatedly. This crime bill does tell them, "Three strikes and you're out." As I have said several times and I said with the Attorney General over at the Justice Department a couple of days ago, this is a controversial provision of the bill. But let us not forget that for many violent criminals today, if the consequences of their crime are serious enough, they could get a life sentence: "One strike and you're out."

But State rules are different from State to State on parole eligibility. And there are many people that we now know are highly likely to continue to repeat certain kinds of very serious crimes. There ought to be a provision in our criminal law that identifies them and that protects the rest of the population and the law enforcement population and permits us to say to other criminals who are not in that category, "You have a chance to start your life again." So, is it right to have a "three strikes and you're out" law? I believe it is. And I think that we're doing the right thing to pass it in this bill today.

We also make available funding for 30,000 more prison cells so that we don't treat this as some sort of mandate on the States. We are trying to help the States to enact their own kinds of sensible punishment laws and bear some of the costs along with them. We also provide funding for smarter and less costly punishment for nonviolent criminals—boot camps for juvenile offenders—and significant, even dramatic, increases in drug treatment so that people who are going to be paroled have a good chance to make it once they go back on the street. I thank you, Sergeant Lawson, for mentioning Lee Brown, the Director of our drug policy. Now he worries not only about community policing but about how we can make sure, when we do parole people, they're likely to be law-abiding. And I can tell you, it does not make

sense, when you look at the percentage of people who commit crimes who have a drug or an alcohol abuse problem, it does not make any sense to put them back on the street without adequate drug treatment. Finally, this bill does something about that. And the Congress should be urged to pass it for that reason alone, along with the other good things in the bill.

Let me say finally, this bill has a healthy dose of prevention. And we know that works. And I was glad to see Sergeant Lawson speak up for prevention. It's funny, you know, you hear sometimes the debates in the Congress and people who want to be tough on crime say, "Well, this prevention stuff, it's a little squishy, and maybe we shouldn't spend the money on it." But if you talk to any veteran police officer, they tell you, "Spend the money on prevention. Give me the tools to do alcohol and drug abuse education. Give me the tools to give these kids something to do before school and after school and at night. Give me the tools to give these young people something to say yes to, instead of just having us tell them to say no to something wrong." That's what the law enforcement community tells us. So I would ask you as you go to the Hill today, if you believe that, as every law enforcement official I've ever spoken with does, tell the Congress that prevention is an important part of this.

On Monday at the Justice Department, a young man from Boston named Eddie Cutanda stood up and said he used to hate the police. Pretty brave kid. There were about 500 police officers there when he said it. [Laughter] And he said he used to hate the police, because he used to run the streets with his friends. But he got away from gangs and drugs, thanks to a community policing program and the kind of afterschool activity that the officers were able to bring to the young people of Boston, a prevention program that worked, that made this young man and his friends go from hating the police to loving the police and had him standing up in the Justice Department with the Attorney General and the President of the United States, saying, "We are not part of a lost generation. We want to have a life and a better future." There are all kinds of prevention strategies in this bill including the opportunity for some of our communities to offer large numbers of jobs to teenagers who are today out of work, just to test to see whether that will lower the crime rate dramatically. We will be able to experiment

with a lot of different things, as well as building on what works in community after community.

You know, I ran for this job and moved to Washington because I wanted to help empower people back home all over America to solve their own problems. That's what this crime bill does. And another thing I am proud of is we do it without new taxes, even though, as Mayor James said, it is by far the biggest Federal investment, and Mayor Abramson emphasized, by far the biggest Federal investment in anticrime activities in the history of this country.

We do it by taking a major portion of the Vice President's reinventing Government plan, a plan to reduce the Federal bureaucracy by 250,000 employees over the next 5 years and put all the savings into a trust fund directed to fund the crime bill. That's a pretty good swap: reduce the Federal Government by 250,000 by attrition, by early retirement, with discipline over the next 5 years, and give all the money from the savings back to local communities to make our streets, our homes, and our schools safer.

Again, let me thank you all for coming here. Let me remind you that this is not a partisan issue or a sectional issue or a racial issue or an income issue. If anything should unite our country, if anything should truly make us a United States of America in 1994, it should be the passionate desire to restore real freedom to our streets, to give our families back their security, to give our children back their future.

I thank all of you for what you have done to secure it. I look forward now to honoring these fine police men and women behind me, and I urge you: take this opportunity to make it abundantly clear to the United States Congress that America should not wait another day, another week, for a crime bill that will achieve these objectives. We need it, and you can deliver it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Willie L. Williams, chief of police, Los Angeles, CA.

Statement on the Pacific Northwest Forest Management Plan

April 14, 1994

Today marks the beginning of a new era for the Pacific Northwest and for forestry management across our Nation.

With this decision, we begin efforts to restore the forests that make the region beautiful, productive, and utterly unique. We are taking the single most important step toward once again having a steady flow of timber to Pacific Northwest mills. At the same time, the plan provides for sustainable management of our Nation's precious natural resources.

This plan fulfills the commitment I made one year ago. It is environmentally credible and backed by the best available science. It meets the high standards required by Federal court and expected by the American people. It is a document that should move management of Federal forests out of the courts and into the hands of professional resource managers. Today's decision moves us from gridlock to growth, from obstructionism to opportunity.

The Secretaries' decision today offers a hopeful break from the past. It is just one element of a strong and comprehensive plan for the Pacific Northwest. Working closely with the Congress, my administration has forged powerful new partnerships with State and local governments in the region. We are creating new, well-paying jobs in timber-dependent communities and are providing the certainty that investors and businesses in the region have so desperately needed. Our ties to the region and our commitment of financial support for the next 5 years will continue to provide the leadership for a full economic recovery.

NOTE: The Record of Decision was signed by Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt.