

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks to the National Association of Police Organizations

October 13, 1994

Thank you. Thank you so much, Tom and Bob. Thank you for the kind words. Thank you for the "Top Cop" honors. Before we came out, Tom also made me a New York City detective. So now, after 2 years, I finally have an excuse for all the traffic I stop when I go up there. [Laughter]

I'd also like to say what a signal honor it is for me just to be on the stage with these 12 fine officers behind me who will be recognized later and who put their lives on the line every day, as so many others do. But I am profoundly honored to be here with them, and I honor their achievements.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to the Members of Congress who are here who supported the crime bill and especially to all of NAPO's members and all the law enforcement community who fought so hard with us to pass that crime bill. Dennis Flaherty and Mick Ganley, who hosted me in Minneapolis, are here, and they deserve some special thanks, too, because I think we sort of jump-started the effort to pass the crime bill in Minneapolis that day, when those who wanted to kill it on a technicality thought we were dead and gone and expected us to give up. We didn't because you didn't. And now we have the crime bill, thanks to you, to all of you, and I thank you for that.

There are some other folks here from the Law Enforcement Steering Committee I want to recognize: John Pitta of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association; Jim Rhinebarger, Johnny Hughes of the Troopers Coalition; Chris Sullivan with the International Brotherhood of Police Officers. I thank all of them for their support as well.

You know, I came here 20 months ago, having lived in Washington only when I was a young man, as a college student. I was never part of the political environment here. I found, looking at it from a distance, things to admire, but

much to question. And I must say, having gone through this crime bill debate, I have a lot of admiration for those people in both parties who hung in there with us, but still much to question.

You know, around here, people talk a problem to death, and then when the time comes to do something about it, everybody looks for a reason not to do it. I saw it happen with the deficit; I saw it happen with crime. But there are real things in this crime bill, as Tom said. And I guess that's what I really want to emphasize.

Yesterday at the White House, we had the kickoff of the crime bill. Just 12 days after I signed it, we released the first round of police grants to 400 communities of all sizes, all across the country, all the way from little bitty towns in our most rural States to our largest cities. And I saw smalltown mayors and smalltown police chiefs come up to me and say, "You know, finally someone has done something to help us keep our streets safer, our schools safer, our neighborhoods safer."

I met a young officer from Ocean City, Maryland, who was hired last year in one of our police hiring grants—you know, we started this last year and have already put about 2,000 more police officers on the street. Already, this young man had apprehended a serial rapist on his bicycle beat as a community police officer. That one officer has already made a difference in countless people's lives who will never know him, because they will not be victimized by the person he caught.

Over the next 5 years, another 100,000 police officers, just like him and just like you, will join you on the beat around the country because of the crime bill which has passed. If all of them are actually put into direct patrol, that will amount to a 20 percent increase in the direct police coverage the American people have. It will lower the crime rate. It will make

people safer. It will make them feel more secure. It will make them feel greater confidence in their Government and in the way their tax dollars are being spent. And if it hadn't been for you, fighting like crazy in the 11th hour, it wouldn't have happened. So I thank you for those efforts.

You know, somebody asked me when we started this why I felt so strongly about this, why I wanted to do this so much. And there are a lot of reasons. The first job I ever had as an elected official was as attorney general of my State. And I have worked with police officers and in the criminal justice system for a very long time now. For a dozen years, I served as a Governor. I had to build a prison system, run a parole and probation system, carry out the capital punishment law of my State, develop boot camps and other alternatives for first-time nonviolent offenders, and generally watch as this country became more violent and our response to it was clearly inadequate. I've also been to quite a few funerals of law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty. And it only takes one to make an indelible impression and to impose on every other citizen a terrific obligation to do what we can to turn this situation around.

A lot of you probably saw when I was campaigning for the crime bill, I often read from a letter a 9-year-old boy from New Orleans sent me, named James Darby, saying that he and his classmates were afraid to walk on the street in New Orleans and would I please make his life safer. He just knew I could do it; after all, I was the President. A couple of weeks after James Darby wrote me that letter, he was shot dead on the streets, just because he happened to be in the wrong place, not because he did anything wrong. A couple of months ago, a young 13-year-old honor student here in Maryland, right across the District line, was shot standing on the street—with his whole life before him.

And we think sometime, well, only kids who live in violent neighborhoods are affected by this. That's not true. The day after the crime bill passed, I found a note on my desk at the White House which almost made me cry, a carefully typewritten note from the son of a member of my administration who is 10 or 11 years old. And he said, "You know, I have been following this crime bill all summer long, and I know you may think that a kid like me wouldn't worry

about it. I know I live in a nice house in a nice neighborhood, and I go to a nice school. But every time I go downtown to the movies, I think there is a good chance I'll be shot with my friends on the street. And now that this crime bill has passed, I'm going to sleep better tonight." Think about it: in your country, in 1994, a 10-year-old kid writing a letter to the President like that.

And just a couple of days ago, I was in Michigan and I met with the editorial board of the Detroit Free Press. And they got all these letters from children, because they've got a great children's project in the newspapers out there, trying to save kids and give them a better future. And they read me a letter from a young girl named Porsha, who just said she wanted me to make her feel free again. And as long as she felt in danger, she wasn't free.

So I don't think what I did as your President was so remarkable; it was my plain duty. What I thought was remarkable was that people would be looking all over town to find excuses not to do it. We shouldn't have had to work as hard as we did to do it, but that's something I've learned about coming to Washington: Every change is twice as hard as it ought to be. But then again, when you get it done, it feels twice as good as it would have otherwise. So I thank you all for that.

You know, tonight I can't leave here without noting that thousands of our American forces are standing up for our Nation's mission in Haiti and in the Persian Gulf. And I hope that our prayers will be with them. We should be so proud of them; they are astonishingly remarkable, able men and women. But it's also important that the American people know that today the most dangerous work of our society is done in trying to contain violence here at home. And the men and women who put on a uniform every day and try to give girls like little Porsha a sense of security and real freedom, who try to make sure that there won't be any more James Darbys, who keep on going even when people they work with have been shot or wounded, who deal with all the frustrations and anxieties that come along with thinking that problems can never be solved, we owe you an enormous amount.

And let me just say to all of you, you mustn't give up. The truth is, we're making progress in this fight. And we're fighting against big, deep, sweeping trends. For 30 years or more,

America's neighborhoods have been growing more violent as families have broken down and community institutions have broken down and traditional avenues of opportunity and education and work have broken down and the vacuum has been filled by guns and gangs and drugs and violence. This has been happening a very long time. But we are actually learning things that we can do about it, things that people in uniform can do not only in punishment but in prevention, things that community leaders can do. And there is city after city after city, town after town after town in this country where the crime rate is going down.

The big problem we have to face now is that the rate of random violence among children, people under 18, is still going up. But what I wish to say to you is that America now knows that we can't ask you to do all the work alone. People are willing to go shoulder-to-shoulder with you in your communities. Public opinion in this country demanded that this crime bill be passed, and we are going to keep going until we get the crime rates down, not holding the line, driving them down—driving them down.

The things that are in this bill, starting with the police, the 100,000 more jail cells for serious offenders, the stiffer penalties, the prevention money, the assault weapons ban, the ban on handgun ownership by juveniles, these things are important, and they will help you to drive the crime rate down. I hated to step on the applause line on the assault weapons ban—*[laughter]*—but I thank you for doing that. All these things will matter. We now have enough

experience with the Brady bill to know that because of the Brady bill, thousands and thousands of people who had no business being able to buy handguns have not gotten them. We know that now.

So what I ask you to do is to go home, make sure this crime bill works. If you think it's not working, you let me know. We are going to reduce the size of the Federal Government by a quarter of a million and more over the next 6 years and take every last red cent, in reducing the size of the Federal Government to its lowest level since President Kennedy was here, and pay for the crime bill. That's how we're paying for it. All the money is going from the Federal bureaucracy to communities to help fight crime. We have got to spend this money properly. We have got to do honor to the people we honor tonight and to all of you. Help us spend the money right. Convince the people back home we did the right thing, and convince them to look forward with hope and optimism. We know what to do. We have the tools to do it. We can make America a safer place. And with your leadership and God's grace, we will.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:52 p.m. at the Capital Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Scotto, president, and Robert Scully, executive director, National Organization of Police Officers; Dennis Flaherty, executive director, Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association; and Sgt. Michael Ganley, Minneapolis Police Department.

Remarks on the Restoration of Haitian Democracy

October 14, 1994

President Aristide; distinguished Haitian guests; to the distinguished Members of Congress who are here, Senator Dodd, Congressman Rangel, Congressman Conyers, Congressman Oberstar, Congressman Combest; to the members of the United States military and their families who are here; to the friends of Haiti and the process of peace and reconciliation:

Three years ago, the international community, led by the United States, set out to restore Haiti's democratically elected government.

Today, on the eve of President Aristide's return to his beloved nation, we mark the end of one stage of the long and difficult journey and the beginning of a new era of hope for the people of Haiti.

Halfway around the world, America's armed forces are also bringing a message of hope and confidence to the people of Kuwait. Our troops have responded rapidly to the threat from Iraq, and I have ordered that the deployment of personnel and equipment to the area continue. Let