

Remarks Announcing Proposed Anti-Gang and Youth Crime Control Legislation

May 13, 1996

Ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by thanking all of you for coming here and, more importantly, for the work that you are doing. I'm glad that we finally have a chance to talk about these efforts to stop youth violence.

As you know, we were slated to have this event the day that Ron Brown and his delegation tragically lost their lives in the Balkans. Before I go forward, I think I have to acknowledge that today all Americans have heavy hearts over another air tragedy, the one in Miami. We send our prayers, our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the Everglades.

The Federal Aviation Administration has been conducting a review of ValuJet since February. Last night the FAA announced it will broaden the review to assure that ValuJet's flights are safe and fully comply with FAA requirements. I have directed Secretary Pena to report to me this week on additional measures the Department of Transportation and the FAA can take to ensure that all our airlines continue to operate at the highest level of safety. I'm determined to do everything I can to make sure that American aviation is the safest in the world.

Now, let me thank the Attorney General and the U.S. attorneys and all of those who worked with them for the work they have done to curb youth violence and gangs. Thanks to the U.S. attorneys and the police chiefs here today, thanks to citizen supporters throughout this country, including a number of ex-gang members who in some communities have been very helpful in this regard, we have been able to see a substantial drop in the crime rate. We are determined to do all we can to help you and to help our young people.

The crime bill of 1994 employed, as the Attorney General said, police, punishment, and prevention, backed by the best of new technologies and supported by communities. We knew this strategy would work because law enforcement people said it would work. And it is working. The 100,000 police, the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, the other supports have led to drops in violent crime and murder and

rape and robbery—everything across the board, except for crimes committed by young people.

Youth violence is on the rise, as you have noted, not just in large cities but in small towns. And whenever there has been a dramatic rise in youth crime, it has a terrifying face, organized gangs. In my State of the Union Address I challenged our country to focus on the problem of youth violence, and I pledged that the United States Government would take on gangs in the way we had taken on the mob decades ago. We're fighting with a strategy that is coordinated and unrelenting, that does rely upon national, State, and local prosecutors and police and, above all, on citizens working with us.

Two weeks ago in Miami, General Barry McCaffrey, our drug policy coordinator, and I set forth our drug strategy. We know what works there, too: education, treatment, stopping drugs at the border, punishing those who sell to the young. We are focusing this strategy more than ever before on young people.

Last Friday at Penn State University, I asked citizens all across our country to play their role. We know that community policing won't work if we rely on police alone, that we need citizens, too. And I asked one million new citizen volunteers to join the 100,000 new police we are putting on the street. That's just 50 new members for every one of the community police watch organizations across this country today.

Today I want to announce two more steps. First, we have just seen a remarkable demonstration of the National Gang Tracking Network, which is an important part of this strategy. I am pleased to announce that the first step of this network will now be funded through the Justice Department for use in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Vermont, Maryland, and Florida. Gangs are no longer local. We saw that today with the statement Miss Seymour made about South Carolina. So we say this: The gangs may run to another State, but they cannot hide. And they will find it tougher and tougher to escape the law.

Second, we are proposing legislation designed with valuable help from the U.S. attorneys here, from local law enforcement officials, and law-

May 13 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

makers, especially Senators Biden and Kohl and Congressman Schumer. Our “Anti-Gang and Youth Crime Control Act of 1996” will use the very same strategy our crime bill used to make the juvenile justice system tougher and smarter, and to help our young people stay drug-free and away from guns and gangs and violence. It makes it easier for prosecutors to prosecute violent youth offenders as adults, toughens penalties for possession and use of firearms, reinstates a ban on guns in the schools, reviving a law that was struck down in the courts. It will establish more juvenile drug courts which give nonviolent offenders the chance to get off drugs before they wind up in jail. It will raise the maximum detention to 10 years and give judges flexibility in sentencing. It will harden penalties for those who sell drugs to children or use children to sell drugs.

All this will help, but we also will have to have more parents being more responsible in teaching their children right from wrong and in looking out for them and more communities showing young people that they care, considering things like keeping their schools open more after school.

We know 50 percent of the juvenile crime in this country occurs in the hours after the school day ends. More communities have considered doing what Long Beach, California, has done and what the Attorney General is trying to help others do, consider whether setting up a school uniform policy will help to reduce the influence of gangs and help to identify gang

members and help to keep the crime rate down and the children safer. Regardless, we’ve all got a role to play if we’re going to move toward a 21st century that is more free of guns and drugs and violent gangs.

The message today to the Bloods, the Crips, to every criminal gang preying on the innocent is clear: We mean to put you out of business, to break the backs of your organization, to stop you from terrorizing our neighborhoods and our children, to put you away for a very long time. We have just begun the job, and we do not intend to stop until we have finished.

Let me say again, this legislation I offer today has been developed with help from law enforcement. It is like the crime bill of 1994, straightforward, commonsense, there are no hidden meanings, there are no poison pills. It relies on partnerships with communities and citizens. And I hope Congress will join us in a bipartisan commitment to save our neighborhoods, our families, and our children from the threat of gangs and gang violence.

This again is something we should be able to do, even this year, in a genuine spirit of bipartisanship, because we know it will work, and we know it will make a profound difference.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the May 11 crash of ValuJet Flight 592. The President also referred to Margaret Seymour, acting U.S. attorney for South Carolina.

Message to the Congress Reporting a Budget Deferral

May 14, 1996

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, I herewith report one revised deferral of budgetary resources, totaling \$1.4 billion. The deferral affects the International Security Assistance program.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

May 14, 1996.

NOTE: The report detailing the deferral was published in the *Federal Register* on May 24.