

*Apr. 29 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997*

## Statement on U.S. Sentencing Commission Action on Penalties for Drug Offenses

*April 29, 1997*

I commend the Sentencing Commission for moving forward with recommendations to Congress to reduce the disparity between crack and powder cocaine penalties. My administration will give them very serious consideration. I have asked Director McCaffrey and Attorney General Reno to review the recommendations and to report back to me in 60 days. I look forward to working with the Congress on this issue.

In October 1995, I signed legislation disapproving the Sentencing Commission's recommendation to equalize penalties for crack and powder cocaine distribution by dramatically reducing the penalties for crack. I believe that was the wrong approach then and would be the wrong approach now.

Current law creates a substantial disparity between sentences for crack and powder cocaine. This disparity has led to a perception of unfairness and inconsistency in the Federal criminal justice system.

The sentencing laws must continue to reflect that crack cocaine is a more harmful form of cocaine. The Sentencing Commission's new recommendations do so. Trafficking in crack, and the violence it fosters, has a devastating impact on communities across America, especially inner-city communities. Any change in penalties must ensure that more dangerous offenders receive tougher sentences.

As I have stated before, however, some adjustment to the cocaine penalty structure is warranted as a matter of sound criminal justice policy. Federal prosecutors should target mid- and high-level drug traffickers, rather than low-level drug offenders. An adjustment to the penalty scheme will help ensure this allocation of resources and make our Federal efforts in fighting drugs more effective. That is why the legislation I signed directed the Sentencing Commission to undertake additional review of these issues and to report back with new recommendations.

I am also pleased that the Sentencing Commission has increased penalties for methamphetamine offenses pursuant to the legislation which I signed into law last year. This law asked the Commission to toughen penalties on this emerging drug to prevent the kind of epidemic we saw in the 1980's with cocaine use. We will carefully study these new penalties.

My administration has fought to stop drug abuse and its destructive consequences. Overall, drug use in the United States has fallen dramatically—by half in 15 years. And cocaine use has dramatically decreased since the high point in 1985—the number of current cocaine users is down by 74 percent over the last decade. While these are encouraging figures, I am fully committed to doing more to keep bringing drug use down—particularly among our children.

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Jose Aznar of Spain and an Exchange With Reporters

*April 30, 1997*

*President Clinton.* Well, let me begin by welcoming President Aznar and his group of leaders from Spain. Spain has set an example for the world now for quite a few years in its transition to a remarkable and healthy and vibrant democracy, which produced your recent election, and has been a very valuable ally and partner of the United States in Bosnia and now in Guatemala and, of course, is going to be the host

of our summit on NATO in July. So we're looking very much forward to being there. And we appreciate you very much.

Yes, we have our fingers crossed. [*Laughter*]

### *Budget Agreement*

*Q.* Have you got a budget deal, Mr. President? And why did Chelsea pick Stanford? [*Laughter*]

*President Clinton.* Not yet, but if you look at the economic news this morning, it is one more clear example that we did the right thing in '93 and that the right strategy is to bring the deficit down, expand trade, and invest in education and training and science and technology. And so, if we can get an agreement that does all that—that is, balances the budget but also continues to invest in the areas that our people need to grow the economy—then I will support it. And we're working hard. We worked hard yesterday. And perhaps it will happen.

*Q.* Before you go to Mexico?

*President Clinton.* Oh, I don't know about that.

#### *Chelsea Clinton's College Selection*

*Q.* Tell us about why Chelsea chose Stanford—why you think she did?

*President Clinton.* I don't know. She looked at all these schools, she had wonderful choices, and she made her own decision. And her mother and I are proud of her, and we support her.

You know, the great thing about America is that there are literally a few hundred world-class educational institutions in this country. And she didn't have a bad choice; she just picked the decision she thought was best for her.

*Q.* How do you feel about her going so far away?

*President Clinton.* Well, the planes run out there, and the phones work out there. [*Laughter*] And the E-mail works out there. So we'll be all right.

*Q.* What was your role, sir, in the decision?

*President Clinton.* None, except I listened, asked questions, and attempted to have no influence whatever.

#### *Hong Kong*

*Q.* Mr. President, did you get any assurances from the Foreign Minister of Hong Kong that Hong Kong would enjoy greater autonomy under Chinese rule? Did you get any assurances?

*President Clinton.* Well, we had a good discussion about Hong Kong, and he assured me that China intended to observe the terms of the agreement of 1984 that they made with Great Britain and that the United States supported back then. I was quite satisfied with what

he said. And I certainly hope that it will reflect Chinese policy.

*The Vice President.* Thank you. *Muchas gracias.*

#### *Extraterritorial Impact of Sanctions*

*Q.* Do you consider the conflict on Helms-Burton completely finished, sir?

*President Clinton.* I hope so.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

#### *Visit of President Aznar*

*President Clinton.* Is everybody in?

Let me begin by welcoming President Aznar here to visit us. We have had a wonderful partnership with Spain for many years and have admired the vibrant democracy that the Spanish people enjoy, and have appreciated the partnership we have had with Spain in NATO, working together in Bosnia, most recently in Guatemala.

And I want to say a special word of appreciation, obviously, to the President for hosting the NATO summit in Madrid this July. I'm looking forward to that and hoping I can come a day or two early and look around Spain again, for the first time in 30 years.

*President Aznar.* You're invited; you know that. I hope to see you there.

[*At this point, President Aznar continued his remarks in Spanish, and a translation was not provided.*]

#### *Role of Spain in NATO*

*Q.* Mr. President, what do you expect from Spain with the new role that NATO has to play?

*President Clinton.* Well, first of all, I expect an important leadership role. We want Spain integrated fully into the NATO command structure. We're very fortunate in having a Secretary-General of NATO from Spain. And having Madrid be the site of this historic summit when we will vote for the first time to take in new members and hopefully be in a position to celebrate a new arrangement with Russia—we're working on that now; we hope we can achieve that—I think symbolizes the role that Spain will play in the years ahead in NATO.

Also, we look to the Spanish to lead in NATO, to be willing to do what has to be done, to have a say in situations which may not be immediately popular but which are profoundly important.

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Again, let me say, I'm very grateful to the support we've received in Bosnia, to the work we're doing in Guatemala. The influence that Spain has in Latin America is something that's especially important to the United States because we seek to integrate ourselves more closely into Latin America and in partnership with Spain. So we're very hopeful there.

*Q.* [Inaudible]—petition for—taking a bigger role, more important role in the NATO?

*President Clinton.* Well, the details of all that have to be worked out by the command structure. But we want Spain integrated into the structure, yes.

*President's Upcoming Visit to Spain*

*Q.* [Inaudible]—will you come next?

*President Clinton.* I don't know. Since I've been President, I've only been really to Madrid, and for brief periods. But 30 years ago—28

years ago this month, I had a vacation as a very young man in Spain. And I've always wanted to go back, and I've always wanted to have a chance to see it with Hillary. My daughter was able to come to Spain for an extended period a couple of years ago. So we're hoping that we can take just a couple of days off before the summit to see some more things in Spain. I'll follow the President's lead; I won't sketch out my itinerary here because I don't really have one. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Qian Qichen of China; and Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Statement on Economic Expansion and Job Creation

*April 30, 1997*

Today we have received positive news about the Nation's economy—more strong growth with moderate inflation. In the first quarter of this year, the economy grew 5.6 percent on an annualized basis—the highest in a decade. That means more jobs and better wages for American workers and stronger profits for businesses—both large and small. Our sound fiscal policies, together with the hard work of the American people, have sparked a remarkable period of economic expansion and job creation. It is im-

perative that we pass a bipartisan balanced budget agreement to continue this solid economic progress.

Just more than 4 years ago, we inherited a deficit that was nearly \$300 billion, and we have cut it by 63 percent already. While it is still too early to know for certain, our economic policies and this year's healthy growth may help us cut the deficit for the 5th straight year—for the first time in 50 years. Now, it's time to finish the job and balance the budget.

## Statement on the Senate Resolution Establishing National Erase the Hate and Eliminate Racism Day

*April 30, 1997*

I applaud the leadership of Senator Baucus, along with Senator Burns and all Members of the United States Senate who have joined together to designate today as a national day to erase the hate and eliminate racism. America is the world's most diverse democracy, and the world looks to us for leadership in building on

that diversity and showing that it is our greatest strength. Today's resolution shows that the Senate is determined to reach across party lines to help achieve that promise.

We must do all we can to fight bigotry and intolerance, in ugly words and awful violence,